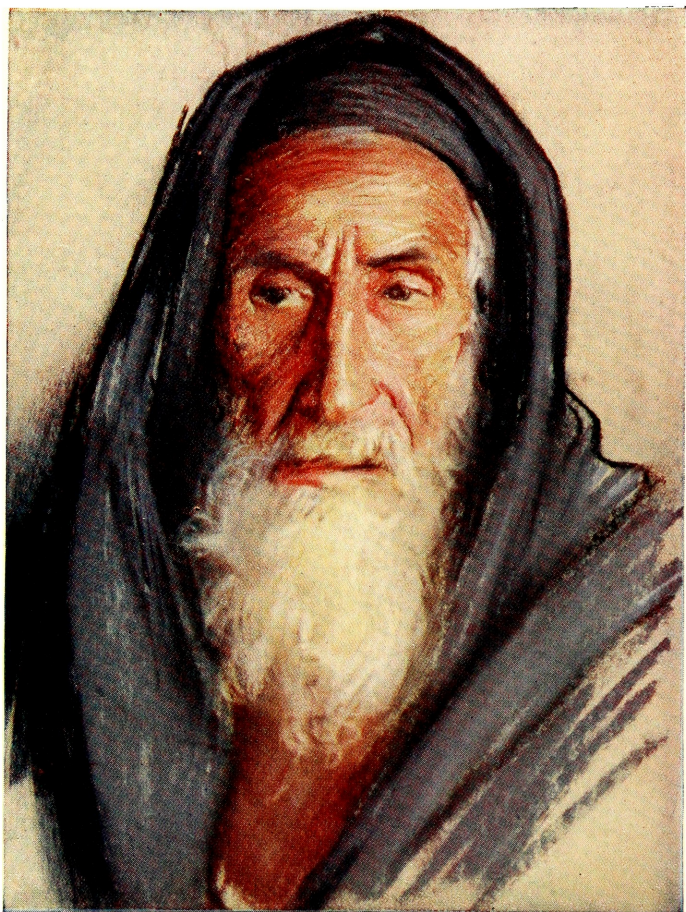


**A JOURNALIST IN THE
HOLY LAND**



A Venerable Jew.
(Sketched at Haifa.)

Harold Copping.

A JOURNALIST IN THE HOLY LAND

GLIMPSES OF EGYPT AND PALESTINE

BY

ARTHUR E. COPPING



ILLUSTRATED BY
HAROLD COPPING

FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

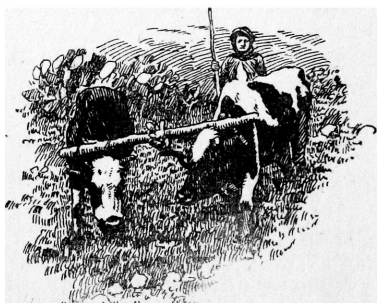
NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO

1912

PREFATORY NOTE



THE following narrative is an informal account of a visit to Egypt and Palestine. It is in no way an attempt at producing a guide-book to either land, still less at dealing fully with the sacred associations of them both. The author's endeavour has been to recall what he himself saw, and to present it in such a way as to provide a book that may remind travellers of their own experiences, or, possibly, stir in other minds the desire to look upon these lands of unsurpassed interest.



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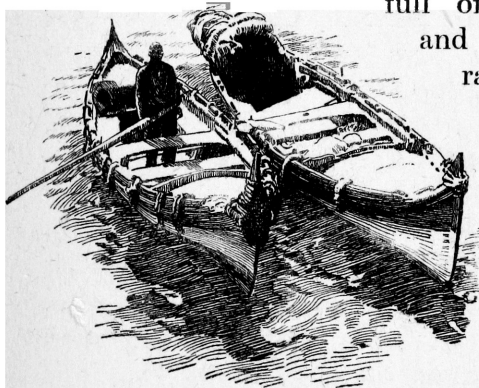
A JOURNALIST IN THE HOLY LAND

CHAPTER I

What Egypt Looks Like

The sunny East—Impressions of Alexandria—A striking instance of fair dealing—On the way to Cairo—The orange-vendor and the egg-exporter: an embarrassing experience—A venerable landscape—Date-palms, camels, and patriarchs—Using the Nile by jugfuls—The sakieh and shadoof at work.

ONE morning I awoke to find the engines going slowly, and our part of the ship full of human hurry and of voices that rang with unaccustomed exhilaration. Going up the companion, I emerged into view of a dreamland solidly real.



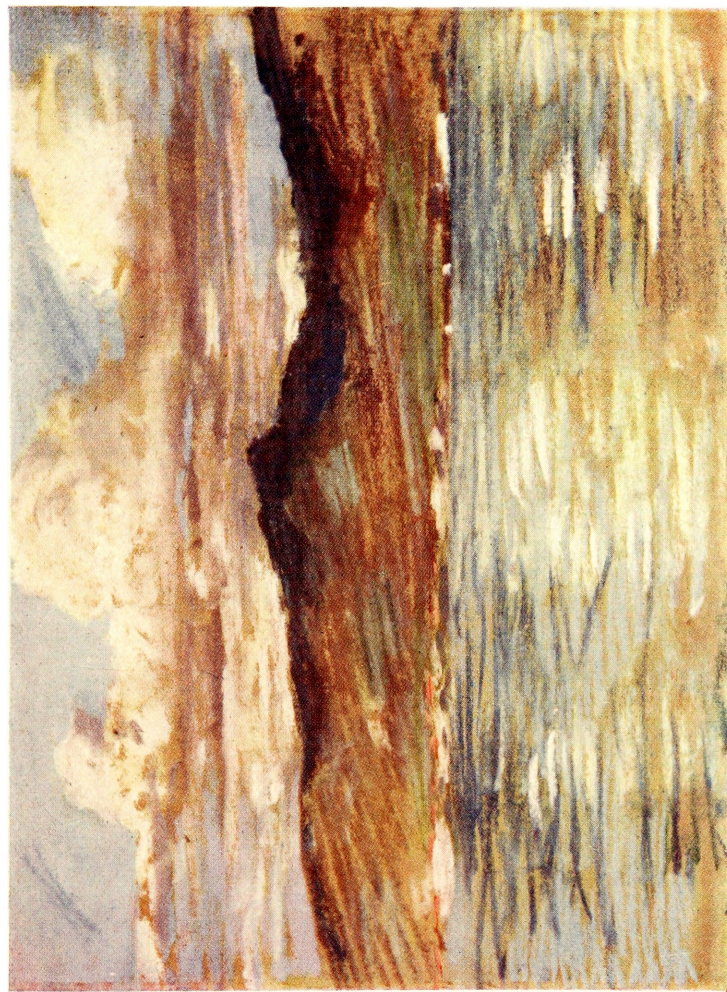
We were at Alexandria, creeping to our moorings. My western eyes now for the first time beheld

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the East. The Mediterranean had been just a sea, exhibiting appearances in common with the Atlantic and other vast areas of water. But Alexandria, with its white buildings, gleaming domes, and placid minarets—above all, with its men in coloured draperies—was a new world. It was a thrilling revelation of bright hues and light. The sunshine on the sea had been English sunshine. This sunshine was an essential part of all that was foreign in the glowing, exquisite scene. The golden light heightened the strangeness of each strange object.

Between the sun and this first sample of the East there was, indeed, a palpable relation. I now saw a city specially designed for sunshine as its ruling experience. To put the case reversely, I now saw sunshine in a human environment appropriate to itself. For climate is the autocratic architect and tailor; and England's brickwork and trousers are dingy and grey in obedience to her wet skies. Lead is the appropriate rain-resisting roofing for our cathedrals. As appropriate, among the snow-white buildings of Alexandria, was that solitary dome of polished emerald, rich with reflections—a joyous harmony with the blue sky.

As the liner slowed to her berth, the Egyptians were upon us in a swift confusion of row-boats.



Harold Cope '98

On the Voyage out—a view of Smyrna from the Mediterranean.

A shrill babel of angry Arabic (conceive a company of perturbed monkeys and parrots) marked the chaotic competition for precedence in boarding. Early arrivals found their way temporarily barred by an officer stationed on the gangway ; meanwhile a bronzed athlete, risking his neck in the name of business, surreptitiously clambered up the side of the structure, and so, by illegitimate means, reached the deck some seconds ahead of his rivals. A minute later the vessel was alive with gowned and perspiring Easterns, who, shoving and upbraiding one another with unlicensed professional jealousy, ran barefooted from cabin to cabin, in a fever to seize and carry the baggage of shore-going passengers.

In this situation, so rich in possibilities of extortion, complications, and lost luggage, I cast a spell over all forces of mischief by asking for Mr. Cook—urbane man, speaking every tongue, awaiting ships and trains by day and by night, a local expert everywhere—for with this ubiquitous personality I had (as is the wise and common practice) contracted that he should be my porter, banker, and guardian throughout a month's exploration in Egypt and Palestine.

On boarding the ship at Alexandria, Mr. Cook—polite, alert, and with muscular natives in his service—had but one anxiety, to wit, that I

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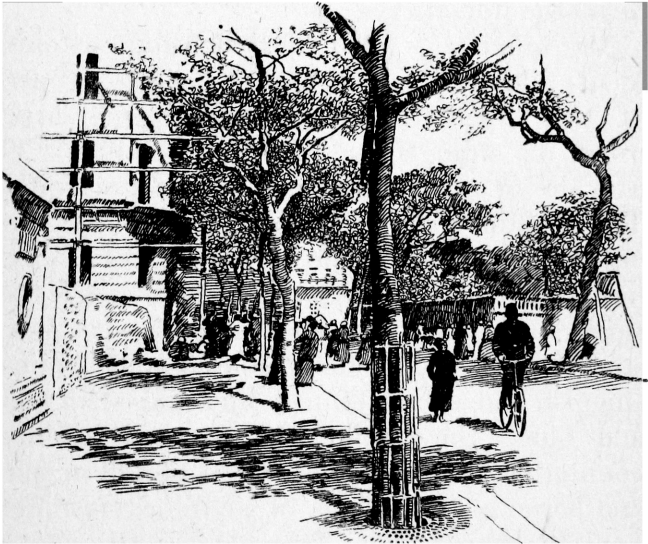
should feel none. I pointed an identifying finger at my two pieces of luggage in leather, with camera, pith-helmet, and overcoat indicated as accessory belongings; and thereafter, the little troubles of travel all delegated, I confronted Alexandria with disengaged faculties.

Five weeks later I made leisurely acquaintance with that city—exploring its broad thoroughfares and byways, and penetrating underground to its newly found corridors of tombs, some still holding their brown litter of mummy bones. But that first day's brief drive to the railway station was the vivid revelation that left memories for always.

My mind was filled with delicious astonishment, and—let me note as a delicate property of the experience—the strange scene largely owed its strangeness to being familiar. The canvases of artists had been a sure preparation. Those dead fragments were graphically borne out by the living whole. House-fronts light in hue and structure, patterned with delicate frettings and angles; unscreened arches as shops, stored with goods rich-coloured and strange; sluggish and sunny human life, draped in white and blue,—these things I had seen before in counterfeit, and was the more uplifted in spirit, and borne on the wings of joyful astonishment, now to behold them in reality. My western soul feasted on the romance of the East. I

went amid bright wonders. There was a magic in the sparkling air. Alexandria was the joyous realization of a dream.

And so into the train for Cairo—a train of corridor construction, and pleasantly unfamiliar in some of its outward features. But it was an evidence of administrative punctiliousness that first claimed my attention. On European railways, when a passenger travels by a class superior to that for which he holds a ticket, it is usual, if the circumstance be detected, for payment of the difference in fares to be required.



A GLIMPSE OF MODERN CAIRO

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In Egypt the amiable logical corollary of this practice finds acceptance.

In obedience to a general requisition for economy with comfort, Messrs. Cook had booked me second-class for this small section of my travels, while two young Birmingham engineers with whom I had come to terms of friendship as we voyaged in company from Marseilles—and who also were pushing on to Cairo by the first available train—found themselves equipped, by the pre-arrangement of a generous employer, with tickets entitling them to first-class accommodation. Prompted by politeness and good nature, they elected, however, to join me in my compartment of less luxury—a circumstance which inspired the ticket-inspector, when he came our way and realized the situation, to a sudden departure for the booking-office, whence he presently came running with exchanged tickets for my companions, supplemented by a handful of coinage representing the amount by which one fare exceeded the other.

The train carried me into a landscape dusty and archaic, with an occasional date-palm bold and conspicuous, and with clusters of habitations square, grey, and primitive. It was Africa and old—it was Egypt and mysterious. But, ravenous as were my eyes for this banquet of novelty, a passing fancy involved me in human

complications which, however I might chafe under the sense of lost opportunity, for long imprisoned my attention within the four walls of that crowded railway carriage.

An Arab had come along the corridor hawking oranges, and, out of sheer appreciation of the colour-harmony formed by the bronze salesman and his golden wares, I had proclaimed myself by pantomime his customer. Our business was transacted with simplicity and dispatch. I handed that noble creature an Egyptian coin of perhaps a shilling in value. He, in return, gave me more oranges than I could possibly need. In a word, he was pleased, and I was pleased; and there, one might have thought, was an end of the matter.

But in the quiet, befezzed stranger seated by my side Fate had, alas! seen fit to endow me with a friend. On a sudden he had plucked my Arab by the arm, and was pouring into his startled ear a torrent of talk which it needed no knowledge of Arabic to identify as denunciation of a severely uncomplimentary order.

The vendor of fruit shrieked his denials, obviously garnished with answering slanders, and for many feverish moments the wordy duel proceeded. Then, with injured mutterings and a painful reluctance, the Arab bent over his basket, whence he abstracted four more oranges, which he added to my store in a manner that

filled me with the guilty sense proper to an extortioner.

Meanwhile my neighbour, now with a face of friendship's smiles, was offering me polyglot explanations, in which a splutter of Franco-English was hopelessly entangled with what was probably Arabic.

Yar . . . thieves of fellaheen . . . I was from Europe—oui ? . . . a traveller to be robbed . . . Ah ! he could not allow. . . . He saw ze monee which I give. . . .

I thanked him. Also I essayed to explain that I did not want any more oranges, and was well content to pay the Arab liberally. But where two persons have not a working vocabulary in common, it is difficult to effect an exchange of ideas, particularly when there is no sympathetic anticipation of a thought to assist its reception. Thus, as was easy to perceive, the only part of my speech which reached the mental target at which it was aimed, was that in which I rendered thanks. With eager courtesy he waved my acknowledgments aside, and then, suddenly readjusting his countenance to an expression of ferocity, he once more fell upon the unhappy Arab.

Out of the depths of my helplessness I perceived that the encounter, so far from being over, had merely entered upon a second stage. Two snakes at deadly feud could hardly have

confronted one another with more hissing hostility. Vainly did I strive to stay the double cataract of personality and Arabic expletives (for, as I have hinted, the general purport of the unknown words could be apprehended without a dictionary). Under the stimulus either of what he was giving or receiving, my companion's face gradually assumed a lively red ; while the Arab, amid his shrieking protests, ever and anon turned his eye-balls upward, as though asking the heavens to witness how deeply he was wronged.

Even while the din was thus at its full, I chanced to note the passengers seated not two yards away on the other side of the corridor. A grave senior raised his eyes, but only temporarily, from his Arabic newspaper, while his fellows continued to peruse the world's tidings with impassive faces. I reflected in amazement that they could not have manifested less concern if this were the usual way of buying oranges in Egypt—a supposition destined, on more intimate knowledge of the East, to prove far less extravagant than might be supposed.

Once more my defender gained an advantage. For the salesman again stooped and, with grievous lamentations, surrendered four more of his oranges into my custody.

And now came a staggering development. Blind and deaf to my desire for peace and an opportunity to scrutinize the passing landscape

(accidental glimpses torturing me with a sense of what I was missing), the zealous stranger thrust forth his two hands and began to plunder the Arab's stock-in-trade, tossing into my lap the proceeds of his ruthless enterprise, so that my Birmingham friends, seeing me rapidly qualifying to open a fruit shop, waxed merry at my expense.

As for the Arab, his case grew critical. Waving his arms in an ecstasy of passion, he spat words of vitriol at his persecutor. Then, suddenly and mysteriously, he scored. The strenuous guardian of my pocket was as one stung. His lips and eyelids quivered, the whole man a prey to emotion. Some verbal shaft, cunningly envenomed by that sore-tried son of the desert, had gone rankling into the living flesh.

The unclean dog, my wounded companion confided to me in panting speech, had cursed him with the worst of all curses (a disparaging allusion, so far as I understood, to the religion of his ancestors); and, rising wrathfully from his seat, he laid some proposition before me with great wealth of gesture and superfluous volubility. For in his exceeding excitement my friend forgot that his words were not my words, so that the meaning was wholly lost upon me. And the next minute he hurried away down the corridor, while the Arab, seizing his basket,

made off with equal celerity in the opposite direction.

Nor was I left long to wonder what this new turn of events might signify. Anon my benefactor came hurrying back, every line of his flushed face testifying to the triumphant exercise of an iron will. He was not alone. Behind him strode a massive military man with sword and epaulettes.

Honouring me with a bow, the new-comer (who looked nothing less than a colonel to my civilian eye) said he understood I desired that the orange-seller should be put in prison for cheating; and his gracious manner seemed to suggest that I had only to say the word and he would cut the rascal in twain with that big, bright sword.

It was an anxious position, though happily one from which the gorgeous official's fine command of English removed the element of chance. I at least was able to make known my unalterable will that the Arab should be left at liberty, though the pair of them insisted on accepting me in the character of a magnanimous Englishman who had successfully pleaded the cause of a thieving villain.

The withdrawal of that majestic figure in uniform may be said to have marked the completion of my little purchase. But I was left with the consequences of the act. It dismayed

me to reflect under what a load of obligation I lay to my painstaking protector, now once more seated peacefully by my side.

I offered him some oranges—if secretly conscious of a motive other than hospitality—but he politely shook his head and indicated a disinclination for the fruit. The Birmingham lads also declined my proffered bounty, though in their case the refusal was, as I knew, merely malicious, and arose from their private enjoyment of my embarrassment as, tightly wedged in my seat, I had perforce to engage both arms in the business of retaining my absurd lapful of yellow globes (how willingly, to be rid of them, would I have given twice what they had cost !), while my attention was at its full stretch to glean some fragments of meaning from the amiable discourse with which I was favoured by my neighbour.

For, conscious of having done me a substantial service, the gentleman in a fez had, as is a common sequel to kindness with impetuous natures, entered into a fraternal sense of property in my personality.

He was at great pains to tell me all about himself, his family, and his business ; and, so far as I could interpret the verbal hotch-potch with which he sought to counteract my linguistic deficiencies, he was a sort of African Spaniard, who gained a livelihood by exporting westward

the eggs of Egyptian poultry. He seemed a little wounded when I had to confess, in reply to definite questions, that in my comings and goings in Europe I had never knowingly seen any of the goods with which he nourished the peoples of that region.

In response to an eager catechism, I had to explain as best I could not merely who and what I was, but whence I came, whither I was going, how much I supposed my journey would cost, whether I was married, and many other matters apparently of vital moment to the egg-exporter. Thus much more time ran to waste, for the obligations of courtesy and gratitude, fortified by a sense of what was obviously expected of me, forbade more than an occasional glance out of window.

But at last we came to a station where, with many cordial farewells, the man of business alighted. And now was Egypt mine to see.

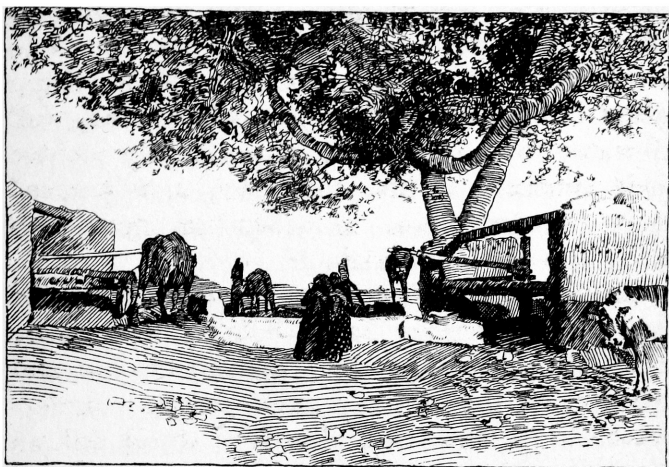
It was a landscape, not of grass and trees, but of dry mud and greyness, with occasional areas of green crops. It looked like part of another world, and very old. I had never dreamt to find Egypt so Egyptian. Here and there one saw the people, in dark flowing draperies, the men bare-legged. Upright, impassive, and full of grave dignity, they moved slowly in a line along the roads and across the land—strings of men, and women, and camels. And certain

patriarchs, bearing long staves in their hands, rode on asses, like figures in a dream.

Moreover, the train itself being invisible from the train, there was no sign of modern Western influence. Some of the empty land was faintly coloured with moisture, and the wetting of it was plainly visible as a great national industry. Those picturesque creatures—it was not difficult to realize—were engaged in an occupation as old as history.

Looking out upon that flat and venerable country, I strove to grasp the marvel of its water-supply. Suffering under the disability of having no rain—or none worth mentioning—Egypt, one might suppose, would be incapable of growing so much as a patch of potatoes. Yet, as we all learnt at school, Egypt maintains a high repute for agricultural fertility, raising impressive quantities of wheat, sugar-cane, cotton, and lentils. And it is all done, as my school-master tried to make me understand, by the annual overflow of the Nile—by a solitary and protracted fresh-water flood-tide—by a phenomenon identical with that which lies behind the frequent announcement in English newspapers, “Floods in the Thames Valley.”

For if Egypt has no rain of its own, it has, during several weeks of summer, a swollen river of borrowed rain—rain that has fallen in tropical torrents three thousand miles away in



"OXEN OR BUFFALOES HARNESSSED TO POLES"

the heart of Africa. This, the bath water of many crocodiles, is cloudy with plant-forming particles which, when the floods subside, leave themselves as a new layer of the rich soil they have slowly built up in the centuries.

When, seated in the journeying train, I came to have a definite curiosity concerning this matter, we chanced to be passing a small canal, still and muddy—doubtless a stored streak of last year's bounty. The simple task of those dignified Egyptians—some with their naked brown bodies flashing in the sunlight—was to raise the water a few feet to the level whence it could trickle in tiny rivulets over the land. They attained their purpose by means primitive,

various, and picturesque. Oxen or buffaloes harnessed to poles walked round and round in a monotony of patient circles, turning a large wheel hung with earthen jars, which, rising full of water from the canal, automatically yielded their contents at the top level, and pursued their circular course to scoop up more—this being the famous sakieh.

Elsewhere the shadoof exhibited against the sky its conspicuous lanky pole, a man easily manipulating the pendant bucket at one end because, at the other, a rude weight counterpoised the lever. Still elsewhere sturdy fellows stood knee-deep in the cloudy liquid, and baled it up into a projecting gutter.

CHAPTER II

Cairo and its Wonders

A dazzling city—Engaging a dragoman—In the golden desert—The pyramids—Arabs whining for baksheesh—On the Great Pyramid : an undignified adventure—The Sphinx—A thrifty photographer—In an Arab village—Deserted homes of Mecca pilgrims—Mirth turned to mourning : a piteous sight—Old Cairo—The Nileometer.

CAIRO made my eyeballs ache. It is a city of coloured splendour, alive and moving, with a hundred gay pigments astir in the sunshine, and every thoroughfare stuffed full, as it seems, of processioning and pageantry. But all those ribbons of tangled prettiness are but the everyday pedestrian traffic. It is you, English tourists in tweeds, who are the curiosity, and how dingily discordant !

Of my first walk in Cairo a vivid memory remains of side streets old, untidy, and wondrous picturesque. In one I had to tread cautiously amid little communities of young rabbits and chickens, the unpaved side-walk suffering further encroachment from the presence of their owners, a-squat upon the ground, patiently awaiting

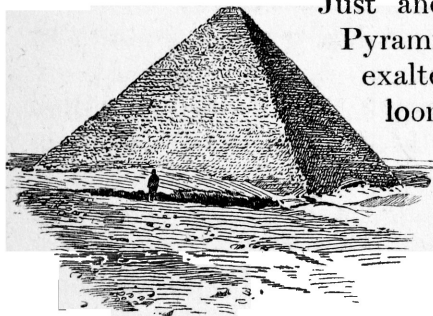
custom. Later, the overtures of a stately Arab in gorgeous attire, who offered himself as my guide, occurred at a moment when, having just seen my Birmingham friends depart by train for Assouan, a sense of loneliness was upon me. So, as we walked together awhile in that dazzling wonderland, I promised to consider his suggestion; and next morning, on finding this resplendent Eastern haunting the portals of my hotel, I consented that he should conduct me to the pyramids.

We walked through the Cairo of official residences and wealth, where broad thoroughfares planted with acacia trees gave entrance to stately white mansions—a quarter of the city that savoured rather of Belgravia than Egypt.

Coming presently to a fine bridge spanning the Nile, we crossed, to find ourselves in a thoroughfare through which, in a green procession of varied zoological interest, the produce of agricultural Egypt was in transit. There were laden carts drawn by oxen, followed by sturdy donkeys thatched with sugar-canes. Also came many a moving stack of clover or cotton, whence scanty details of a camel's anatomy pathetically protruded.

Hard by we took our seats in a smart electric tramcar, which swiftly carried us within sight of the pyramids, figuring still, solemn, and substantial against the sky. On alighting, you pass

by an ascending sandy road through a foreground of modernity—hotel, post office, and antiquity shop. Thereafter the road, losing its semblance of solidity, becomes fine sand, yielding to the foot. The stone boundaries taper to a termination, and you step out into the golden desert, which has a surface of broken hillocks and wavy unevenness, like a petrified sea.



Just ahead lay the Great Pyramid, with some less exalted counterparts looming behind. Like a scattered colony of ants, Arabs were dotted about the sand—hawks eager to prey on the tourist

pigeons; fine-looking fellows, who worship just the one thing—baksheesh. They are perpetually praying, quarrelling, whining for it—they will even work for it.

The importunities of those Arabs are, indeed, a trying supplement to the unmitigated sunshine. Usually baksheesh is demanded for no other reason, apparently, than because the applicant would like some; but occasionally the plea will be speciously based on a service rendered—an unsought and undesired service. Thus, as we advanced towards the Great Pyramid a brown-

skinned impostor ambled ahead, and, with many graphic gestures, pointed out the edifice—lest, peradventure, we had not noticed it—and then, strenuously demanding payment for this service, he sought to emphasise his claim by plucking at my coat—a liberty that prompted me to rebuke him in terms which, if only he had understood them, might have sown seeds of shame and penitence in that bosom.

I calculate that if I had given a gratuity to every bronzed creature who asked for one, my visit to the East would have cost scarce less than a small battleship. Happily there was the comforting thought that, in brushing aside all these appeals, one was assisting to build up national character. Such individual effort could, perhaps, usefully be supplemented by instruction in Government schools, so that the younger generation might grow up to realize that begging is not quite the thing.

Inherited tendencies notwithstanding, there is a good basis to work upon. For those Arabs carry themselves with lofty poise of head, and there are rich streaks of pride in their nature. Thus, even on a first day's acquaintance, my dragoman was careful to reveal himself as a person holding several titles to the world's esteem. The son of a sheik, one article of attire he wore cost more, as on a careful comparison of prices I was fain to admit, than the whole of my



AT THE FOOT OF THE GREAT PYRAMID: MY GUIDES

wardrobe—a discovery, by the by, on which I based a suggestion for some abatement of the fee payable for his companionship; though on that point he proved unalterable. Again, this stately Oriental owned broad and fertile acres, besides an Arab mare of prized pedigree, and fleet of foot beyond the ordinary.

My climbing of the Great Pyramid proved an affair of which the countrymen of Earl Cromer and Viscount Kitchener have no occasion to be proud. Of the thousands who have essayed the exploit, I did not hear of one, man, woman, or child, who failed quite so ignominiously as did I.

It was all due to a curious oversight. Standing at the base of that mountain of man's making, which rose to the sky in receding terraces of stone, I was so exalted by a sense of the capacity of ancient Egyptians that I forgot about a small defect in the physical equipment of my modern self.

A group of four Arabs offering, for a sufficiently moderate sum, to conduct me to the top, I consented to their proposal without a second thought; and next minute we began the excursion skyward which was to end with so little credit to myself. Mounting from stone to stone involves some tolerably severe stretching of the legs, but my experienced guides selected a course which took advantage of all easy steps afforded by broken masonry, while my difficulties were further qualified by an Arab arm stretched down now and then to assist in hauling me up, not to mention an occasional friendly push behind.

Climbing up high ledges in the broiling Sahara proved very warm work; and several times I made respectful suggestion that we might tarry awhile by the way.

"Not yet! Not yet!" responded the leader of the expedition, and in a manner so firm that, hot and panting, I lacked the energy to oppose his will. But at last, when by my reckoning we must be near the top of the pyramid, however high it might be, I sat me down, protesting that

whatever views my companions might hold upon the point, I meant to have a rest.

“But,” exclaimed the Arab in authority, “English gentleman not gone quarter part the way! Not yet a long time is the top of the pyramid! Up, up to go three more times than he come!”

Very likely. But I had ceased to be interested in the top of the pyramid. My highest aspiration now was to reach the bottom. Having for the first time looked below, I had gone sick and giddy. The depressed perspective had refused to get into focus, my brain was swimming, and I could not feel my feet.

Now came the tardy remembrance that I am not endowed with the capacity to scale altitudes. There returned a memory, ten years old, of crossing a plank in a martello tower, when, on gazing down at a heaving chasm, I lost authority over my limbs. And on that occasion too late I remembered—as, again too late, I now recalled—a boyhood’s escapade of going up a ladder to the housetop, where I awoke to sensations of helplessness and terror, and narrowly escaped a catastrophe.

With shut eyes I told the Arab chieftain how the matter stood—that I was dazed and dizzy, and that, so far as I could diagnose the situation, nothing now remained but for me to topple over and descend in a long series of soft thuds from

projection to projection of that stupendous stone staircase.

"I am a sheik," he replied, "Sheik Issa Abdoul!"

Not quite seeing what that had to do with it, I opened my eyes to find him striking an attitude and proudly patting his distended bosom.

His next words were more to the point: "With me no harm anybody can take!" and, in view of the healthy optimism of this sentiment, I readily overlooked its appalling egotism.

Sitting on the stonework by my side, the Sheik, inspired by that hint of how I might descend, spluttered out detailed accounts, very graphic and gory, of men who had gone down that way. At the risk of seeming rude, I told him that his anecdotes did not interest me. Then he spoke of "other" distinguished Englishmen (note the Sheik's business acumen) whom he had escorted up the pyramid. But, indeed, I was paying scant attention, and my response bore solely on the problem how to return alive to the remote sandy surface of the earth.

"The Englishman is not afraid," cried the Sheik, with expostulatory palms uplifted. "No, no—not afraid!"

I begged his pardon. I *was* afraid—nay, as he could see for himself, I was, as some of my countrymen would put it, "in a blue funk."

At this a gladness came over the Arab, and,

with many repetitions under his breath, he carefully memorised the prized addition to his English vocabulary, with intent, as I could not doubt, to rap it out upon the next European he escorted aloft.

What was of more moment to me, he removed his turban and unwound it to such a length of folded cotton material that, after tying one end round my waist as harness, enough remained in his hand to serve as reins. For, much more scientific than dignified, this arrangement was a little like playing at horses.

The Sheik holding me in leash from behind, a barefooted Arab was my escort on either side, while yet a third, prepared for all emergencies, went in front. Thus slowly they brought the panic-stricken Alpinist back to mother-earth.

Of several titles to my esteem won by those children of sun and sand, not the least concerned their virtuous forbearance in not suggesting, when I quaked helpless at their mercy on that mammoth monument, some expansion of the modest payment with which I had contracted to reward their services. And when, let me bear further testimony, I supplemented the agreed sum with a small bonus, their gratitude was gratifying.

I rejoined my patient dragoman, and we sauntered some little way across the sandy undulations until, of a sudden, I beheld that

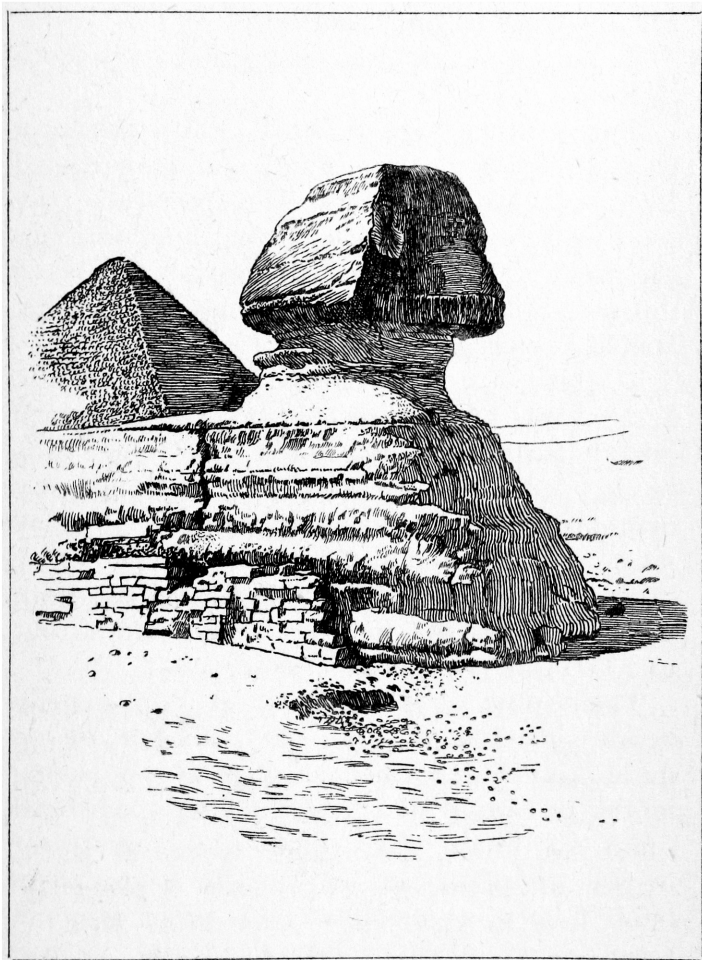
female stone thing of mystery and delight—the Sphinx, battered but beautiful.

There she stood, clean and still, in a smooth hollow.

She is neither large nor small. For her creator was an artist in proportion, and remembered that pyramids were near. The spectator's only sense of strangeness in size is that human beings thereabouts are tiny. When an Arab clambered up the Sphinx and stood beneath her chin, behold an upright insect !

To gaze at leisure on the mutilated beauty, I sat down to my lunch before her—in which lowly situation I early noted large black ants busily perambulating the sand. Hafez, my dragoman, had gone apart to breathe his midday prayers ; but I did not lack for company. A dozen or so Arabs collected about me, and, with patient reiteration, joined in an earnest but unavailing request for baksheesh.

Then came a Western to sit down coolly beside me, and this on the strength of no more acquaintance than arose from our having journeyed side by side on the car, and exchanged some talk by the way. I had then learnt—for he was an American, and greatly interested in himself—that, a schoolmaster by profession, and having a mind to explore the world, he had contracted to supply a stereoscopic company with views of famous spots he visited ; thus



"THE SPHINX, BATTERED BUT BEAUTIFUL"

utilizing a proficiency in photography to cover the cost of his travels.

By voyaging on a cargo steamer in a capacity, as it seemed to me, little removed from a stowaway, he had made his slow and circuitous passage from America to Egypt at a total outlay of £9; and he plumed himself on the fact that, in a back room of an obscure street in Cairo, he was living on next to nothing a day.

With glance fixed respectfully on my tomatoes and cold chicken, he now asked if I knew where he could obtain food without being imposed upon in the matter of price; and, partly by way of plumbing human character, I told him he was welcome to the bulk of my lunch, as in that hot weather half a roll and a small tomato would serve my needs.

“Really!” he exclaimed, his eyes bright with emotion. “Oh, thank you, thank you very much”; and, lifting my laden napkin to his lap, he fell to with an alacrity suggestive of a fear that I might change my mind. And the wondering Arabs watched, still droning their vain appeal for pecuniary assistance.

Our meal over, the zealous apostle of thrift bustled off to his camera, where I presently noted him in passionate altercation with a picturesque patriarch holding a richly caparisoned camel. Presently my late guest came hurrying back with a moving tale to unfold.

Desiring that venerable man and beast as foreground accessories to his view of the Sphinx, he had planted his tripod in a situation to capture their images in a happy relation to the monument ; but the wily old Arab, scenting the scheme ere time sufficed for its accomplishment, had not merely withdrawn with his quadruped from the lens's field of vision, but had obstinately declined to return thither until a money payment was promised him.

Finding reproaches and appeals alike unavailing, the stereoscopist had at last been reduced to discussing terms—which had given occasion, as I could well believe, to a lively exchange of conflicting ideas ; and now, having gotten the ancient down to his lowest figure (which also I could well believe), the schoolmaster came to me with a business proposition.

I, like himself, had a camera, and I doubtless, no less than he, would wish the man and camel in my picture ; so what did I say to sharing the payment ? That my assent took a load off his mind was attested by the nimble gait in which he went off to pose the models how he wanted them ; and next minute we were releasing our focal-plane shutters. I took three views, and, as though blindly emulating that pattern of thrift, I took them all, as was afterwards to be revealed, on one plate.

When my dragoman returned, he and I went

exploring tombs and dungeons in the vicinity, and anon were sauntering in an Arab village close thereby. White flags over certain doors bore witness that the faithful had gone on pilgrimage to Mecca. One flag hung limp and worn, while the dust of many winds had sealed up the entrance, and my companion, telling of grievous butcheries on the road to Mahomet's tomb, shook his head dismally.

Sufficient population remained to lend interest and animation to the village. A group of veiled girls were so gracious as laughingly to tolerate my audacity in taking their photograph, while a few bright, brown, naked children followed in our wake, wondering but unafraid.

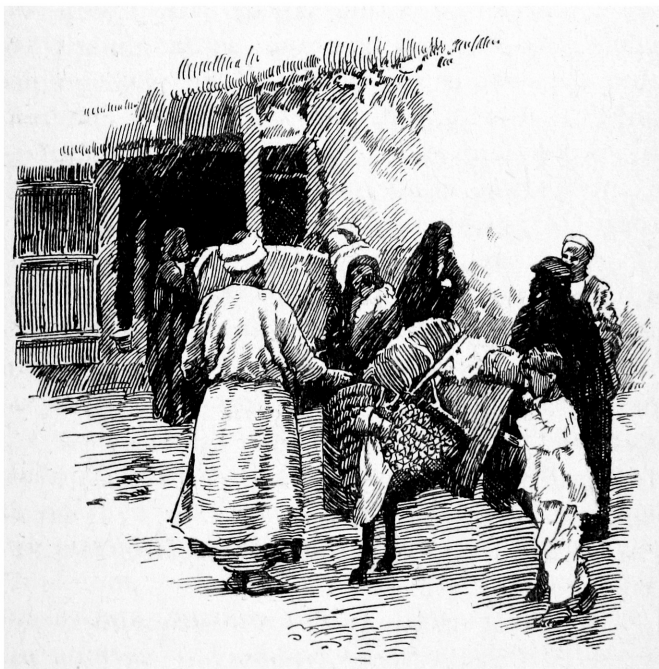
Outside the village store we found an evening group of gossiping elders, with youngsters engaged in solemn pastimes; and a spirit of leisurely homeliness entered so conspicuously into the assembly that I was moved, not merely to pause in the midst of those people, but to proffer them, through the dragoman, my best compliments.

This friendly overture met with a cordial response, and, chancing to cast my eyes on a male infant of some comeliness, I jestingly offered to purchase the little creature for eight piastres (say 1s. 7½*d.* in our coinage) and carry him away with me to England. On learning in Arabic what I had been pleased to propose, the

company gave vent to bright guffaws that needed no translation, and whereof a further chorus was provoked when a woman, asquat beside the juvenile, threw back at us some answering words.

"She thank you vair much," interpreted my dignified companion, "but she say him a good boy and she not think she sell him."

"Bravo!" was scarce out of my mouth when that happened which left me open-eyed with astonishment. Silence and a new spirit had



AT THE ARAB VILLAGE

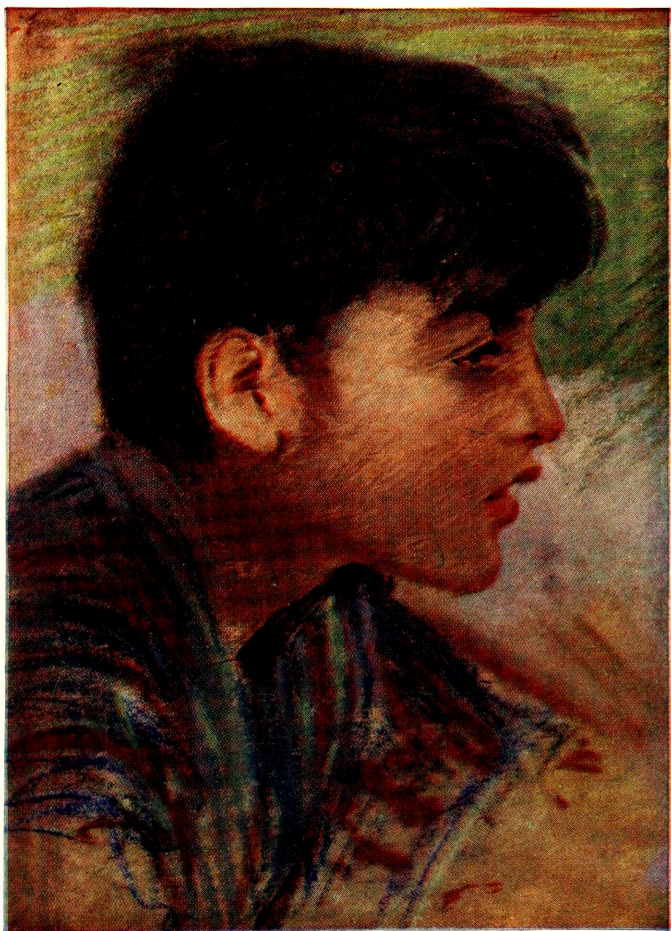
descended on all those people, and with one accord they went hurrying across the sandy arena, and passed as a precipitate procession into an alley that pierced the warren of little mud homes.

Instinctively we strode after them, Hafez to my eager questions replying that some one must be dead. And soon he had the facts.

Several days before, an Arab youth of that village, walking upon the carriage road, was run over by the brougham of a Bey, receiving injuries for which he was taken to a Cairo hospital. News had just arrived that he had died ; and at once the wailing relatives, followed by their sympathizing neighbours, were setting forth to bring back the body, that they might give it immediate sepulture in the sand. I caught a glimpse of the bereaved father at the head of that sad procession. The poor old Arab was rending his garments as he ran.

When presently Hafez and I passed out of the village, the last of its inhabitants that we saw was an ancient figure in rags engaged with feeble hands in making cakes of dung, which he set in the sunlight to dry for fuel. This old man, Hafez told me, had no kinsfolk, and was very poor.

On subsequent days I became acquainted with some of Cairo's many wonders. Superb views leave a memory of countless domes and minarets



An Arab boy

shining in a golden perspective from the Citadel. In the noble Museum I found Rameses II. as a disrobed mummy, and still with a relic of yellow hair attached to his venerable cranium.

A journey to Old Cairo (less difficult than going by the "Tube" from Chancery Lane to the Marble Arch) transferred me to a region of picturesque and malodorous poverty, whereof my mind preserves the hateful picture of an old woman sitting asleep by the roadway, with flies resting in crowded circles about her inflamed eyelids. Thence we took boat across a narrow stretch of Nile to Roda Island, which proved full of the quiet spirit proper to a monastery. In a dank chamber, having features in common with a tomb and a well, I beheld the famous Nileometer—a stone column with measurements marked off as a constant index to the level of the river.

Passing through irrigated gardens of leafy shade and unfamiliar flowers, I came to a spot, marked by a palm, where, according to Arab tradition, Moses was found in the bulrushes. To view the site at better advantage, I descended neighbouring steps and walked out upon the broad stretch of dry Nile mud.

CHAPTER III

A Mohammedan Horror

Dancing and howling dervishes—Asleep among the sugar-canes—
On the Nile by starlight—Crocodiles and a superstition—The
Moharram celebration—In a panic-stricken multitude—The
people beaten by soldiers—An awful procession—Self-inflicted
wounds—The Suez Canal—Over-zealous porters at Port Said.

“**O**NE reform my country needs,” said a young Egyptian doctor with whom I became acquainted, “is the substitution of capable and educated guides for our present dragomans.” He found himself with leisure, it happily chanced, to demonstrate, in his own person, how greatly a visitor would benefit by the innovation.

Under the doctor’s escort I saw the dervishes. First we visited the “dancing” variety, who, in their circular mosque, spin round and round on twinkling feet with such sustained dexterity that the spectator, growing giddy and weary, is apt to turn his back on an unfinished performance. The “howlers,” flinging about their bodies and persistently uttering dolorous groans, pleased me even less. Indeed, with money

charged for admission, and an area railed off for strangers, the element of show is in both cases more manifest than any spirit of spontaneous piety.

Also my friend bethought him, as a way to give me pleasure, of a row on the Nile by starlight; and thus, when the night had come, and after an experience of Turkish confectionery, we walked to the river and crossed the suspension bridge. This was to find ourselves in the al fresco sugar-cane market, where pans of glowing charcoal (means of making coffee) shed their ghostly illumination on recumbent figures asleep under the trees—a place of mystery, and very quiet.

I had never tasted sugar-cane; and the doctor, on learning this, insisted that I must not miss my present opportunity. Wherefore the next minute was he stooping over a great blue bundle of snoring unconsciousness, to which he addressed words loud and insistent. At his reiterated Arabic, the blue bundle resolved itself into an old Egyptian of chocolate-coloured visage, who, getting asquat, blinked at us with sleepy, plaintive eyes.

On surrendering a little piastre, we had permission to take three canes from a neighbouring pile, the venerable merchant being positively too sleepy to engage in the customary attempt to secure excessive payment. The doctor selected

canes he judged to be juicy, and the old man went to sleep again.

My lesson was easy to learn. You tear off the bark with your teeth, one segment at a time, and you suck and chew the remaining white stick. Chatting and munching and smacking our lips, we strolled to the water's edge, where I made confession that the juice was running down my arm. That, the doctor explained, was a common experience of the novice.

"If you be not careful," he added, "it will also trickle down your chest."

Creeping along a gangway, he peered beneath the awning of a yacht, saying, "Ali! Ali!" softly.

Again and again he spoke that name, but always with no result. My friend's gentle voice, the lapping of the water, and night-birds calling over Ghizeh way, were the only sounds that broke the stillness of the night.

"I can see him," whispered the doctor; "but he is sound asleep."

"Give him a prod," I suggested.

He administered the restorative and woke up—the wrong man. But the sweet temper of the Egyptian sailor was proof against this severe provocation. He indicated the near vessel on which Ali slumbered, and straightway returned to his dreams. Obeying this sure direction, the doctor soon had Ali awake and grinning.

A lithe Soudanese sailor boy is Ali, and it was good to see him clutch gratefully at the proffered sugar-cane. In a little while he and we, in a broad thick boat with heavy oars, were floating on the broad bosom of the Nile in the calm light of the stars.

The doctor and I laboured in turns at the rowlocks ; then, surrendering the oars to Ali, we talked of Egypt—a theme, as I knew, dear to my companion's heart.

But he spoke of modern Egypt, whereas, when we grew silent under the night's solemn influence, it was of ancient Egypt that I thought—the Egypt of an early civilization dating into the dim past, with its hallowed drama of a people held in bondage, and its sacred page of history concerning a Child and all mankind for ever. And I had seen the image of that Egypt surviving, not indeed in the cities, but in the landscapes of brown earth with camels and date-palms and figures gowned in white or blue. Out on the Nile, in the black Egyptian night, the past became one with the present.

As we glided beside the banks of the Island of Roda, a fishing-boat crossed our bow, and we could see the faces of the fishermen by the light of their lantern. The two men who rowed were singing in the soft, nasal Arabic.

Dipping my hand in the Nile, I found the temperature pleasant. So I playfully challenged

38 A Journalist in the Holy Land

Ali to a swim. The doctor interpreted my suggestion and its reception.

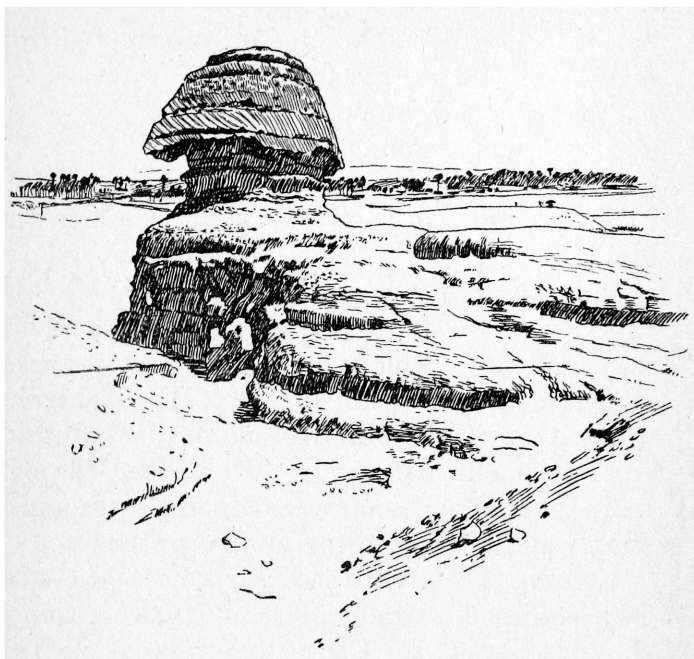
“He says he is afraid of crocodiles.”

“But there are no crocodiles here.”

“There are none really, as he knows. But it is a superstition that one might come in the night.”

Nor did that row on the Nile complete the experiences I owed to the young doctor's friendship. Next evening he took me to see an annual event of awful interest: the Moharram celebration of the Shiites—one of the two principal Mohammedan sects. We walked through many streets, and soon were among a throng of people all hurrying in the same direction.

Coming presently to the Sharia Darb-el-Gedid, I looked upon a strange scene. It was as though the population of Cairo was massed in that thoroughfare. We two were in the dense and perturbed stream of new arrivals moving along the roadway. But the ample illumination revealed, to right and left, a huge waiting assembly monopolizing every point of observation. On the pavement a front row of spectators sat upon the kerb, others behind them occupied a double row of chairs, while still others, tightly wedged together, stood in the background. All the windows, wide open, framed human faces in close clusters—mainly the faces of women and children.



THE SPHINX FROM BEHIND

To see the former, even thus vaguely, was a new experience for me. For, under security of remoteness and artificial light, there was almost universal omission of the veil and nose-shield, which serve by day to render Mohammedan women either hidden or hideous. Even the housetops were fringed with people, figuring darkly against the sky.

It was close on the time for the Persian

procession to come. But here were we, a helpless multitude, in possession of the roadway. That we must be headed back, and driven into the side streets, appeared inevitable. But, I asked myself, would all these people submit to be cheated of the sensation for which they clearly were so eager? A contrast indeed this situation afforded to the elaborate precautions with which, in anticipation of street pageantry, the London authorities preserve an open roadway.

There was a violent development. The air became full of frenzied shouting, and the people poured helter-skelter back. Thanks to the doctor's prompt action, we two maintained our ground. Dragging me after him in an iron grip, he set an example, which I was not slow to follow, of clinging to a post standing beside the kerb. Thus, as the human avalanche swept by, we were able to resist its pressure.

And soon I saw the cause of the scurrying commotion. A company of Cairo's soldier-police (who go armed with sword and pistol) were driving and beating the people. It was their way of clearing a passage for the procession.

With infinite displeasure I beheld those canes raining blows on fellaheen and bedouins, fleeing and full of fear. Even when some poor fellow was singled out for sustained chasing and chastisement, he offered neither resistance nor

remonstrance, his effort being solely directed to reach cover in the retreating throng.

Should I also, with indignant wonder I asked myself, be thrashed for the mere offence of standing in the roadway? No; those diplomatic brown soldiers drew the line at assaulting an Englishman. A friendly official gesture directed us to slip through the cordon, and so find roomy asylum in the stretch of roadway already partly cleared.

Presently our companions in that arena were filled anew with panic, and went stampeding by us. Again, withstanding the pressure of the populace, we saw the cause of this second rout in the advance of a squad of mounted men, also slashing freely with their canes, and slewing round their horses to the further discomfiture of tardy fugitives.

Once more it became a theme of anxious speculation whether events would justify the doctor's faith in the protective influence of my nationality. A beautiful white horse advanced upon us, its rider, with an angry show of teeth, vigorously belabouring Cairo's submissive citizens. Already a reckless arm was raised to smite us, when timely recognition stayed the blow, and, with hasty wave of hand, we were given safe conduct between the horses. The anxious soldier, by further signs, directed that, instead of lingering in the cleared roadway, we

must seek asylum among spectators to right or left.

This proved no easy matter. Crushing our way across the pavement, we entered a small hotel, yet only to learn that, all his windows let, the proprietor could merely offer us standing-room upon the roof. Desiring a more advantageous situation, we returned to the roadway, and finally, after several other vain excursions into the throng, secured, in return for ample payment, two chairs before a little Turkish coffee-shop.

We were just in time. With wild and dismal incantations came the head of the procession— young men carrying flaming braziers high overhead. A second company of beacon-bearers were grouped about a man astride a richly caparisoned steed, from which elevation he was able, with resin-saturated sticks, to replenish the surrounding cages of fire. A few paces behind walked a led horse, also gorgeously draped, and with a helmet fixed conspicuously on his back. Next we saw another group of young men carrying braziers, which illumined a sad, strange horse following them with faltering footsteps. This animal's head hung low, and its body was draped with a great white sheet, penetrated by arrows, and with ghastly splashes of crimson below their points of entrance.

"That is blood," my Egyptian friend whispered. "This represents the horse of Hussein, who was killed by Yazid with an arrow—Saidna Hussein these Persians call him, 'Saidna' meaning 'Our Master.' Hussein was a kinsman of Mahomet, and the murder took place soon after the Prophet's death. These Shiites hold the curious belief that Ali, Hussein's father, should have received the messages that were conveyed through Mahomet. This tenth day of the first month of the lunar year is the anniversary of the death of Hussein, and here, as also throughout Persia, the Shiites are showing they are sorry for the murder. You must now prepare for an awful sight."

The ghastly horse having gone by, we saw a company of men with their vestments open in front. Each man vigorously smote his breast with palm or fist, so that the flesh was inflamed where the blows fell, and all were crying, in hollow tones of pain and supplication, "Hussein! Hussein!" and likewise "Madad! Madad!"—an appeal to God for notice and help.

These men with bare breasts were succeeded by a little group of Mohammedan merchants (in European attire supplemented by the fez), who walked slowly with a grave, abstracted air. Then came another group of men groaning and declaiming in the throes of self-inflicted torture. Their vestments were open behind, and they

swung iron chains in contact with their backs, so that again I saw large areas of flesh lividly crimson, and this time notched across with lines of deeper hue. Composure was once more seen in contrast with agony, for now another group of well-groomed Mohammedans advanced leisurely with faces free from emotion.

Finally came a hateful spectacle that haunts my memory. Brazier-bearers went in front to illumine the horror. While yet our eyes were innocent of the sight, we knew some dreadful thing had come to the view of near spectators, for they were stretching forward with faces rigid and pitiful. The next minute I had seen and turned away, sick and shuddering.

Some dozen bare-headed men and youths robed in white, and roped together in rows for mutual support, were striking their foreheads sideways with the edges of long, glittering knives. The result was blood—blood in copious streams. It deluged their faces, it ran glistening down their necks, it splashed their clothes. As they struck, they uttered hideous, appalling groans. Beside them walked priests, inciting to a greater zeal in this horrid rite. Those red, wet faces of misery can never be forgotten.

Of the nearest sufferers we saw the gory backs; for their heads involuntarily shrank back, causing much blood to course through the hair. The last in the row was but a boy, whose hand

was held by a man—his father, my companion assumed—who was goading the poor little fellow to a freer use of the knife.

Such was the public ceremony, to be followed in private—I was informed—by the slow torturing and killing of a lamb, thus mishandled in the character of Yazid.

And so it happened that my last night in Cairo left me with haunting memories.

Going next morning by rail to Port Said, I saw the Suez Canal. It startles the eye. In a grey landscape of desolate sand, it is straight, narrow, and conspicuous, like a neatly ruled streak of blue paint. Railway and canal running in a close parallel for many miles, you have a good view of mud-dredgers and bright-coloured buoys—modern and matter-of-fact in that ancient desert. When, with head out of window, I looked back, the waterway soon ran from sight behind hillocks, but, just beyond, a great liner was bearing down upon us with copious arising clouds of smoke—a ship gone demented and cruising inland.

I regret to record that my arrival at Port Said railway station was the humble cause of two human bosoms being wrung with emotion. It chanced that, as the train neared its destination, I was busy with a little problem in mental arithmetic. This concerned certain distances in Palestine, divisible by a given number of

available days, and with the speed of two inexperienced horsemen as an unknown factor lending itself to hypothetical treatment.

The engine-driver having, so to speak, finished his work first, I, guided merely by an intelligent instinct, alighted from the train with my belongings, which I deposited on the platform at my feet—a course of action involving no loss of grip on the problem which, because it remained unsolved, continued to engross my mind.

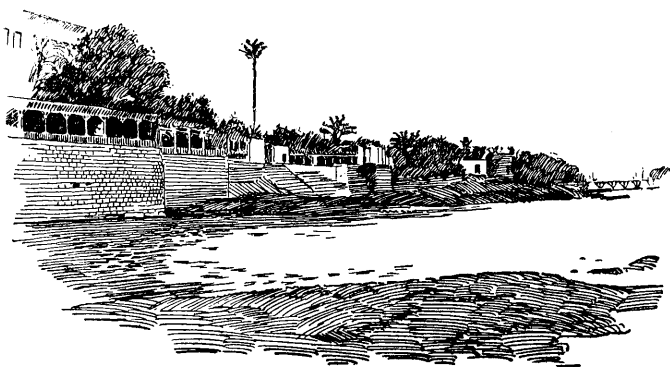
That the platform was a scene of some animation I was dimly aware; also was there a dormant realization that an enthusiastic Bedouin stood by my side, and, with eager reiteration, was proposing to carry my luggage to any desired destination.

The mechanical refusal of this service took the form, not at first of speech, but of a repeated negative jerking of the hand, much as the absorbed student, without withdrawing attention from his book, will war against the persistence of a fly. And just as a failure to rout the insect oft-times generates an irritation which the undistracted intellect would not sanction, so, quickened into lawless anger by the Arab's tireless importunities, I told him to run away and not be such a nuisance—an involuntary observation which, I ask the reader to believe, lacked the authority of my better self.

Nay, I scarce knew I had spoken those words

until I heard them repeated by him to whom they were addressed—a man now wholly beside himself, and dancing about the platform in an extremity of wounded sensitiveness.

If I had shot him with a poisoned arrow he could hardly have zigzagged around in more piteous fashion. Pointing me out with a trembling forefinger, he shrieked into unheeding



RODA ISLAND, ON THE NILE

ears on account of the insult, sometimes in Arabic and sometimes in English:

“He tell me run away! He tell me run away!”

Full of contrition, and with a mind now wholly estranged from my little geographical calculation, I watched that distraught figure until, still searching in vain for sympathy, he was lost in the throng.

Meanwhile the spirit of mischief had been laying plans to make me the unintentional cause of more human tribulation. Suddenly I became aware that a lithe Arab stripling of perhaps fourteen had bravely shouldered my largest piece of luggage, and was turning to beckon me as he staggered with his burden towards the platform exit. Grabbing up my other possessions, I promptly made after the self-appointed porter, and, laying a restraining hand on his arm, commanded him to desist from his unauthorized enterprise.

Reluctant to be baulked of the expected fee, the youth entered into some feverish arguments, which he abruptly terminated to take to his heels—a sudden departure of which the occasion was revealed to me when, on turning, I beheld the runaway being skilfully stalked by two imposing representatives of the Egyptian gendarmerie.

A moment later the captured boy was uttering lamentable blubbering and shrill yells of pain as his little brown head was being cuffed by one of those personages, who seemed bent on assisting the government of Egypt by simultaneously discharging the offices of policeman, judge, and executioner.

Hastening to the spot, I was thunderstruck to learn the indictment: “Me see you stop him try steal. Him bad boy, sar. I take him to

prison all right." Saying which the strong man bent the screaming youngster this way and that, as though ambitious to break his backbone.

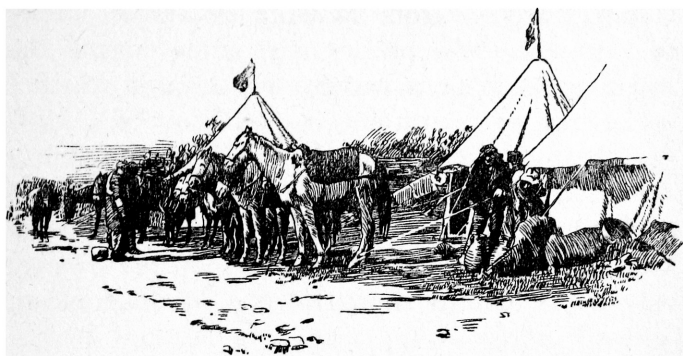
In blunt speech I told the military jack-in-office that the boy was no thief, and that he himself was little removed from a noodle; and, in his great astonishment to find zeal so poorly appreciated, the soldier stood regarding me open-mouthed. His hands must momentarily have relaxed in sympathy with his jaw, for the boy wrenched himself free, and, dodging a dazed and clumsy attempt at recapture, darted away and disappeared.

That seemed a sufficiently satisfactory development, so, leaving the official chewing his moustache, I hied me to a bystander, upon whose cap I had noted the friendly name of "Cook." In guilty silence I submitted to that individual's mild reproaches for that I had not, on the train's arrival, placed myself in his care.

Having spare time at Port Said, I walked some little way along the Suez Canal, noting the black scum left upon the water by a moored fleet of colliers, and gathering shells upon the artificial shore. I saw another and a smaller canal, partly overhung with trees, and holding a fluid precious in the eyes of the city's population. There is a seductive and grateful suggestion in the very description of this second stream of man's devising. The "Sweet Water

Canal" conveys from Ismailia an ample supply of one of life's prime necessities. Near the waterworks there is a gateway, through which I looked out over an uninterrupted view of delta—a vast watery plain where nothing stirred but a few solitary sea-fowl.

Night was falling when, on board a Khedieval steamer, I left Egypt and began my voyage along the eastern shores of the Mediterranean.



OUR CAMP

CHAPTER IV

Arrival in Palestine

Fellow voyagers—A first sight of the Holy Land—Jaffa from the sea—Going ashore at Haifa—Meeting my brother—His presence explained : an artist sent out by the Religious Tract Society—Impressions of the town—Our camp on the shore—Dining under canvas—George the waiter—Solomon the dragoman—Securing our passports—A surprise in the dark—Guarded at night by armed sentinels—Sleeping under mosquito curtains—Beetles and a spider—Viewing a unique collection of ancient glass vessels.

JOURNEYING from Marseilles to Alexandria on a French liner, I had enjoyed the companionship of men and women born under various flags and skies ; but the Egyptian packet provided me with an even richer cosmopolitan experience.

On the Messageries vessel, French and Eng-

lish had been associated with a German watchmaker from New York and a Prussian dame with a Swiss canary, while my cabin companion was a Frenchman with an Italian name who lived in Egypt, was born in Bombay, and had spent some years in England—out of which jumble of terrestrial experiences, by the by, there had emerged a character of great kindness and a manner so polite that he begged me not to cease smoking even when (for he was given to great uneasiness at sea) he lay sick in his bunk.

On the Khedieval boat I sat at meat with a Hungarian on my right, a Turk on my left, a Syrian family opposite, and with priests of Spain, Italy, and Armenia sprinkled along the saloon. Yet, even had we all been able to talk Esperanto, the conversation would scarce, I think, have reached the high level of varied interest of which the composition of the company might seem to give promise.

At our first meeting I looked around at countenances demure, preoccupied, and full of vague misgiving; and when, later, the vessel began some mild gambols in the open sea, empty chairs at meals far outnumbered those in occupation. Indeed—if the reader will not think the reflection pitched in too high a patriotic key—foreigners are, as a class, poor sailors. Indeed, had I not, on the voyage to

Egypt, and during an acquaintance with fiddle-strings and a hurricane, found our assembly of sixty diners, mostly French, dwindle to a group of nine, all English?

A calmness had come over the sea when, in the distance on our right, I first beheld the Holy Land. It was a narrow line of soft greens and purples, with here and there a hint of golden sand; and we were voyaging on blue water in warm sunshine. It was peaceful. It was beautiful. I was sitting on deck upon a coil of rope, and no one was near me. I looked and looked again at Palestine, so delicately defined in tender hues.

A human voice rang out from the bridge, with instructions for the engine-room, while still I gazed at the wondrous little land that links earth with heaven. And I would not have had it otherwise. Thus to be reminded of the modern world was not incongruous with my reverie. Nay, it emphasized my joy to be where I was—I who belonged to the England of to-day, with its halfpenny newspapers and motor omnibuses. And wherefor should the hearty voice of an honest sailorman seem a jarring note in my vision of Palestine? Mystery and ceremonial have crept into religions; but simplicity is a property of the truth on which religions rest. The Truth—that best of all words in the dictionary.

The sea was once more in commotion when we anchored off Jaffa. To see a Palestine town, if from afar, carried me one stage further in a thrilling experience. But indeed that remote, indefinite line of houses appealed rather to the mental than the physical sight. Nearly everything was left to the imagination. The eye could do little more than note the row-boats that came out for passengers (of whom I was not one) intending to land at Jaffa. At first but black specks amid a snowy belt of inshore breakers, they grew to be bulky craft high at bow and stern, like sea-going gondolas. The rowers, habited in scarlet, plied their long oars with powerful precipitancy, in an obvious competition for early places alongside the anchored steamer. We gave them some of our worst cases of seasickness—poor limp mortals whose transfer was effected by strong arms—much luggage being also lowered into the heaving boats.

Anon we resumed our northward voyage along the Palestine coast, until, at the approach of dusk, and with fine rain falling, we anchored off Haifa. Now it was my turn to be a passenger in one of the sturdy row-boats that put off from the shore. But as at last I came to close quarters with a Palestine town, it failed to engross my attention. I was searching eagerly for a familiar sight in that unfamiliar scene. My brother Harold was to meet me at Haifa.

He had been commissioned by the Religious Tract Society to travel through the Holy Land, that he might make studies of its scenery, peoples, and sacred sites, and so be enabled to illustrate Bible scenes with fidelity. Quitting England ten days in advance of me, he had arranged that, after visiting Constantinople, he would land at Beyrout and go by train to Damascus; thus leaving the main part of his Palestine explorations, for which railways were not available, to be undertaken on horseback in my company.

There on the jetty at Haifa he was waiting; and it gave a zest to our meeting that he and I, for so many days, had heard but little of our mother tongue. Soon we were walking briskly along a narrow walled-in thoroughfare, rugged under foot and full of shadows. Haifa had a grimly primitive look. The influence of recent centuries was missing. One could see, even in the twilight, that its inhabitants still lived in the Middle Ages.

But a surprise of more personal interest was what my brother had in store for me.

“Our camp!” he exclaimed, as, emerging from that sepia town, we arrived beside the sea.

On the sloping shore a considerable encampment lay before us in dim silhouette, with lights showing in the large tents, and a company of silent men partly revealed in the glow of a

charcoal fire. And the next minute I stood astonished in an apartment curtained with Oriental splendour. It was, my brother said, our dining-tent.

Two weeks before, I had handed across the counter of Messrs. Cook's office at Ludgate Circus, a cheque for £118. That I was paying for my journey to, through, and from Palestine, and in a sum that covered all costs of food and travelling, I knew. But as to the form our camp life would take I had no clue to assist conjecture. What I had expected I hardly know. The word tent is apt to suggest personal discomfort, with not much room for your feet; while, in contemplating a journey through a semi-civilized land, the traveller naturally supposes that, as the saying goes, he will have to rough it.

The glasses and silver gleamed brightly on the little table which, illumined by candles in handsome candlesticks, was laid for two. My brother told me that dinner was ready, our kitchen arrangements having, it would seem, been timed in accurate relation to the arrival of my steamer. So we sat down then and there. And fish succeeded soup, with poultry, joint, sweets, and dessert following in their rotation. I am not a competent critic of cuisine; but one knows, at least, whether the dishes that come to table are acceptable. Those were. But the excellence

of that meal was but one of several matters that surprised us.

There was the waiter, for instance. Never was I served at table by a man who looked more like some character out of a pantomime. Balloon-like knickerbockers were the outstanding feature of his toilet ; so that, as he was unlikely to be a Dutchman, we set him down for a Turk.

A waiter who put so much heart into his work was new to me. The way he came and went was the perfection of silent celerity ; while his anxious expression, if we helped ourselves sparingly from any dish, was in key with the honest joy that overspread his countenance when we took a second helping.

Although his vocabulary and ours, so far as we could discover, contained not one word in common, we managed an interchange of thought on all essential matters, the waiter's frank and



OUR CAMP ON THE MOVE

mobile face proving a ready index to an alert and kindly mind. It remains but to add that, recognizing the difficulty of ascertaining the actual name of our servant, my brother re-christened him George.

Meanwhile we were gazing about us with growing interest in our canvas quarters. The word tent I withdraw as inadequate. Our lines were cast in a pleasant pavilion. Circular, of not less than twelve feet in diameter, the apartment had a perpendicular wall (if that be not too solid a term to use) about six feet high, the roof tapering to an apex supported by a central pole. But it was the aspect of our dining-room, rather than its size or shape, that excited our remark. For the canvas was enriched with great wealth of crimson decoration, lines of symmetry being varied, at different altitudes, by a belt of detached and various forms, which we assumed to be Arabic characters. The effect was at once cosy, quaint, and splendid.

Nor was George our only visitor. There came to us, as we lingered over oranges and almonds, a strange figure to whom I was vaguely aware of having already been introduced. But in the excitement of meeting my brother on Haifa jetty I had omitted to pay much attention to the unassuming individual whom I found in his company.

Standing impassive, the new-comer spoke to us

in English, quietly and with infinite composure ; and as I looked and listened I found myself hesitating between awe and amusement. The lower part of him—riding breeches, leather gaiters, and heavy boots—hinted at a European stableman ; while the upper part—Eastern head-dress and drapery—suggested an old woman whose brown face was encircled by a shawl. For a figure divided by the waist-line into two portions so foreign to one another, a mermaid is perhaps the nearest analogy. It confused the senses to find dignity in so close association with the grotesque.

My brother rather scandalized me by addressing him as Solomon ; though, as I presently learnt, Solomon was actually the name of our dragoman. For such proved to be the character in which this composite personality had been specially chosen to serve us. Nor was it long before he gave a first proof of zeal for our interests.

Each of us had brought from London a passport giving British sanction to our Eastern travels. But it seemed that, if my brother and I desired to avoid a collision with the Turkish authorities, we must also be armed with local passports. And, since we had finished dinner, Solomon advised that we lose no time in furnishing ourselves with those legal instruments.

Accordingly we set forth in his company to

retraverse some of the narrow alleys of Haifa, a town now plunged in dismal darkness. Coming soon to a building which, as revealed by its meagre lamplight, suggested a village post office, Solomon cautiously opened the door and went in, after bidding us wait outside. Nor was it long before he came out again, and, mysteriously whispering that all was well, conducted us back to our camp. There at his hands I received my local passport, which, to one so ignorant of Arabic as myself, looked something between a death warrant and a laundry bill.

A little later my brother and I adjourned to our sleeping-pavilion, which in size and decoration proved a duplicate of the dining-tent. It was illumined by candles and furnished with two dressing-tables, our luggage, some camp stools, and two beds. Rugs were placed here and there upon what I had almost called the floor; though that is no name for sea-shore shingle covered with a network of low-growing flowers—certainly the daintiest carpet I ever found under a roof.

But there was one feature of the apartment on which we looked at first with little favour, namely, the gauzy canopies of white muslin that hung over our beds—a feminine embellishment which seemed gratuitously at variance with the hardy spirit proper to travellers. Then suddenly the explanation occurred to my brother—

mosquito curtains ! True, we saw no mosquitoes, but perhaps there were some about, and no doubt it was best to be prepared.

In order to be up betimes in the morning, it would be well, my brother pointed out, if we retired early to rest ; and accordingly he set about the preliminaries of going to bed. For my part, I could not resist the temptation to step first out into the open ; for I heard quiet waves caressing the pebbles not many yards away, and I fain would fill my lungs with the refreshing night air.

It was very dark outside. The glow of the charcoal fire was gone, and our encampment was given over to silence and broken snoring. Gingerly I walked down towards the water ; and the pale starlight, gradually gaining in value for my eyes, revealed the dim difference between shore and sea and sky. And it chanced that my attention was arrested by a stout post or pillar which I detected, conspicuous against the grey background, a yard or so away ; whereupon, following the prompting of an idle curiosity, I went closer and stretched forth a hand to examine what I took to be the weather-worn stump of a beacon.

Judge then how my nerves jumped at the discovery that this black shape, standing uncannily still, was that of a man—and no ordinary man. For I saw in silhouette a great shaggy

turbaned head, and the next moment I had discerned a figure raggedly clad in Eastern breeches with bandaged legs, the sinister form of a pistol butt protruding above the hip. His face was indistinguishable, but I knew by the poise of the head that two unseen eyes were fixed on me.

"I beg your pardon—I didn't see you at first," I lamely gasped. The man's arms gave an upward jerk, and the barrel of a rifle was revealed, sloping against his shoulder. He emitted some hollow nasal sounds that were unlike human speech and highly disconcerting.

The soft music of the waves had lost their charm for me. Restraining myself by an effort from footsteps of flight, I got back to the tent, carrying in my mind the image of as truculent a ruffian as ever figured in tales of Spanish brigandage.

"Why," exclaimed my brother, when I recounted my experience, "that must have been one of our guard. I hope you didn't frighten him! I forgot to tell you—Solomon says we shall often have soldiers to protect our camp at night. Otherwise, it seems, we might be molested or robbed."

Strange how personal interests will colour our impressions of other people. My miscreant of a minute ago had already become a picturesque foreigner. Nay, a certain rugged ferocity in his

aspect now assumed the character of a virtue, since it strengthened one's sense of his prowess as a champion.

Meanwhile my brother, to judge by his indignant exclamation, had discovered a more serious menace to our peace. He had caught a spider in his bed, a spider large and alert, with hairy legs.

"It's all very well," said my brother, "but I don't like this sort of thing." And indeed here was a cloud across our vista of life under idyllic conditions.

He carefully stripped his bed, searching everywhere for any further intruders—an example I was quick to follow. His hunt happily proved unavailing, but I found two green beetles under my pillow.

In remaking our beds we were careful to tuck in the coverlets, instead of again leaving them hanging to the ground as ladders for venturesome insects. And now it was not long before, having adjusted our mosquito curtains around us, we blew out the candles and fell fast asleep.

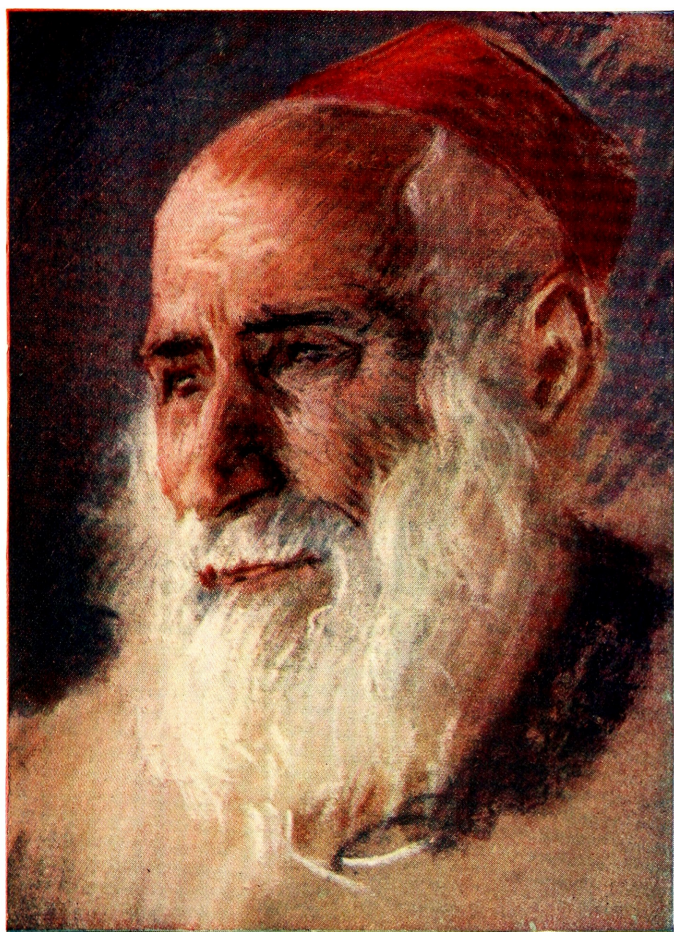
When next I saw our camp, the sun was shining and a babel of merry talk arose from the strangely clad men bustling to and fro among the tents.

After breakfast we set forth with Solomon to pay a morning call. It seemed that in Haifa there dwelt a learned antiquary whose collection

of ancient glass ware my brother wished to see. We saw it; and I am left with the memory of many beautiful vessels and of a still more beautiful courtesy.

It is a delightful experience to call at a house as a stranger and be received as a friend; and one's delight is the greater when this happens in a foreign town, especially in a town so foreign as Haifa. To show us his treasures where they stood in their cabinets was not enough for the antiquary. He took them all out, and—that the English artist might see each shape to full advantage—he placed them with loving hands on a long trestle table.

Indeed, that kind old gentleman spared us so much of his time that, when at last we took our leave, Solomon looked anxiously at his watch, and then set forth briskly towards the centre of the town. There we found our horses.



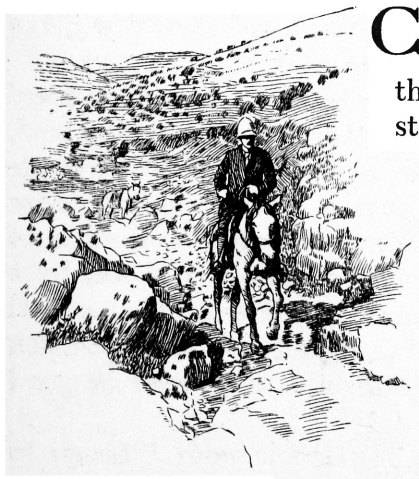
A Jewish Beggar.

Harold Copping.

CHAPTER V

First Days on Horseback

Four horses and a muleteer—Can a middle-aged man learn to ride?—Why some people never go to Palestine—False impressions accounted for—A digression with a moral—My lessons at a riding-school—Drastic tuition—What it feels like to trot—Another method of learning—Our departure from Haifa—The serene sea-coast—My horse bolts—How he was stopped—Solomon's reproaches and scepticism—Caution ill rewarded : another frantic gallop—Luncheon on the sandhills—Mahomet blames the bridle—An undignified way out of the difficulty.



CHAMPING their bits and pawing the ground, there stood four tall horses—two chestnuts and two greys; and holding them in leash was a swarthy muleteer who, by reason of his black ringlets and bloodshot eyes, looked unpleasantly like a pirate at first sight.

66 A Journalist in the Holy Land

Let me frankly confess that I beheld those quadrupeds without enthusiasm. I am not a riding man. Nay, until a few weeks before, when the project of visiting Palestine first entered my mind, no experience was more remote from my inclination or thoughts than equestrianism.

To say that is to lay stress on a difference that marks your lifelong citizen from a person who, if only in his youthful years, has enjoyed the opportunities of a country existence. Rightly or wrongly, I had always classed riding a horse with playing the violin and swimming: if you could do it you could do it, and if you couldn't it was no good trying; it being a condition of proficiency in all three arts, as I had been given to understand, that you must begin young.

As it happened, the necessity to ride a horse had also found my brother, not only unprepared, but dubious of his capacity to qualify for the emergency. Nay, had not the personal desire to visit Palestine been supported by a sense of professional obligation, we must, I think, have accepted our ignorance of horsemanship as fatal to our plans. And in crying off the expedition on that ground we should have been in good company.

How often have I heard it said: "To go to the Holy Land was a great ambition of mine, but, you see, I do not ride." And again: "If

only Palestine were opened up with railways!" (an aspiration, by the way, that will scarce be echoed by those who have seen the country as it is, still retaining the aspect of a hallowed antiquity, and who may well feel jealous lest steam traction should mitigate those primitive glories).

In this connection, too, I think of the incomplete explorations of many distinguished persons. Besides visiting coast towns whither the steamer conveys them, they journey to Jerusalem by what was, until a recent date, Palestine's only railway, and drive thence to Jericho and the Dead Sea. And it is certain of those travellers, let me parenthetically remark, who report Palestine as arid, and its landscapes as lacking in sylvan charm. They judge by rocky heights and sandy undulations in the vicinity of Jerusalem. They have not seen lovely Nazareth in the sunshine. They have not stood waist-deep in flowers, and gazed on the Sea of Galilee. Not for them are the emerald valleys or the plains on fire with scarlet anemones.

And now, in the name of example and encouragement, I propose to present my readers with the equestrian experiences of my brother and myself—than whom, let me frankly confess, it would be difficult to find any two persons less "horsey."

To begin at the beginning: three weeks before starting for the East, I visited a London riding-school, where it was explained that for £1 5s. 6d. I could have six lessons of one hour each, which might be taken at any time on any day. Incidentally I peered into the school, a large barn-like structure, where one horse and rider were going round and round in the brown tan.

"How many lessons has he had?" I asked, for the man carried himself with enviable ease and grace.

"Oh, he learnt years ago," replied the riding-master. "He is just taking a little exercise."

"I've never been on a horse in my life," said I, anxious for comfort.

"No?" said the riding-master.

"And I feel rather nervous about it."

"Oh, that'll be all right."

"I've never even been on a donkey."

"No?"

"In fact, the only thing I have ridden is a bicycle."

"Yes."

"I suppose riding a horse is like everything else—you learn gradually, moving on from one stage to another?"

"Yes."

He simply would not talk.

"One gets thrown a few times at first, no doubt?" I suggested.

As he did not reply, I added: "But of course it does not hurt on that soft stuff?"

"No," he said, in a tone that might have meant anything.

So I left unconsoled, and with no clues.

When, a few days later, I arrived for my first lesson, the office was empty. Again peering through the window, I saw three mounted gentlemen, and one mounted lady, trotting in the tan. So many moving hoofs made the place look dangerous, so I resolved to call again later, when it might be my better fortune to find those people gone. But already the riding-master, standing in the arena, had perceived a stranger in his office, and he came sternly with long strides to learn what the intrusion might mean.

On hearing that I wished to be his pupil, he straightway busied himself with pen and ink, and wrote me out a book of tickets.

"I'll drop in a little later," I said, "when there's more room."

"Oh, no," he replied. "Come now"; and without another word he returned to the tan.

His was the quiet tone of command. I did not know how to disobey. So I meekly hung my coat on a peg, and, wondering if I ought also to leave my hat, I followed my taciturn master.

After all, the horses were moving only along the outer limits of the arena. In the centre there was plenty of room wherein a novice might receive verbal instruction. For this first lesson would of course be confined to theory—on that point my mind was unclouded by doubt. There would be so much to explain—how to sit in the saddle, where to rest your weight, what to do with your knees, and so on. Moreover, the principles that underlay mounting, guiding, stopping, and alighting would have to be carefully explained; and I surmised that a considerable portion of the first lesson would be general guidance as to what is best to be done when your horse rears, bucks, stumbles, or bolts. I wondered whether this instruction would be imparted with or without the aid of a wooden dummy horse such as one sees in gymnasiums and saddlers' shops.

As I entered the arena by one door, a fourth horse was led out by another. Dear me, thought I, there was going to be another rider; and so much the less room for me.

But the situation developed in a manner contrary to these conjectures.

The riding-master went up to the led horse—which to my eye seemed a mettlesome beast—and beckoned me by raising the butt end of his whip.

“With the right hand you take the ends of the reins—so,” he demonstrated. “Then you

insert the two middle fingers of the left hand—so. Then, having thrown the end over—so—you take hold of the mane and, facing the tail, place the left foot in the stirrup—so. Now do it.”

Slowly and blunderingly I repeated the movements, thinking within myself that, after all, it was of course best to demonstrate these matters by means of the living reality.

When I had reached the final position, my mentor said, “That’s all right”; whereupon I withdrew my foot from the stirrup.

“Here! What are you doing?” said the riding-master, and he added, somewhat severely; “Put it back.”

Those words obliterated time. Once more, after so many years of freedom and independence, I was back at school—a serf with a slate, under an autocrat with a cane. Now, as then, there was nothing for it but humble obedience. Once more instinct told me it were vain to try and teach the teacher how to teach. I must do as I was bid.

So the left foot was thrust again into the left stirrup.

“That’s it,” said the riding-master in a tone of kindness. “Now get up.”

“Now do *what*?” I asked.

“Get up!” he repeated, this time in the hard voice of Fate and the schoolmaster.

“Swing up; it’s easy enough.”

“What!” I gained time by gasping, “Clamber up there?”—pointing to the beast’s broad back.

“Yes, up you get! Look sharp!”

Argument, it was clear, would be useless. With a wild upward effort, and with not a pennyworth of thought for the poor horse, I successfully ascended; and next minute was surveying my tyrant from the saddle.

The groom fidgeted with the right stirrup and thrust my foot into it. Then the riding-master said: “Now trot round.”

The horse must have understood him. I had many urgent questions to ask, but no opportunity for asking them. I was a cork on the angry sea. I was the victim of an earthquake of horseflesh. Oh, the jolting and the jarring!

How to avoid falling off? My thoughts were busy with that problem when another arose to fill my mind with panic—how to steer? We were heading straight for a post. The groom had said something about moving the reins this way or that. But which way for which direction? I experimented, and we just managed to miss the post; but, oh, how nearly I lost my balance in turning the corner!

“Don’t be beaten! Stick to it!”

Dimly I heard those encouraging words from the riding-master. But he might have saved his breath. For my life’s sake I could be trusted to do my best to remain in the saddle. For

the rest, I knew not how to dismount, or—necessary preliminary—how to stop the horse.

I allow the other riders full credit for that our zigzag course resulted in no collisions. But presently we knocked down a post. I say “we,” though I did not want the horse to do it.

After a long spell of jolt, jolt, jolt, my quadruped fell into a walking pace, which was far more comfortable for me.

“I’ll get you a stick,” said the riding-master.

I wondered what he supposed I wanted a stick for. But he brought one, and handed it up to me, and bade me beat the horse with it, to make the horse go faster. Never in my life, however, did I feel less disposed to ill-treat a dumb animal.

At last the time came when my master showed me how to dismount—a lesson I was eager to learn; and one of the longest half-hours I ever remember then came to a close.

Thus fully have I revealed how far my conduct was removed, on this particular occasion, from that of a reckless hero; for I fain would have the reader appraise his own spirit by the poorer standard of my own, and so recognize his fitness to overcome easily the fears and difficulties which even I, as these pages will show, succeeded to a sufficient degree in mastering.

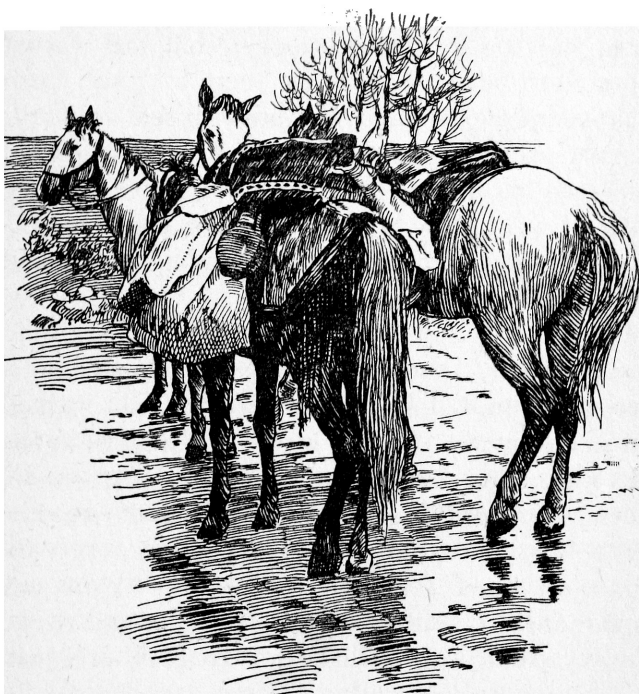
A stiffness of body was my portion on the day following that first visit to the riding-

school—a first visit that had carried me so far along the path of knowledge that my worst apprehensions were already seen to have been misapprehensions ; and I found myself applauding the sagacity of a master who, instead of allowing his pupil to linger shivering on the brink of the unknown, had plunged him straight-way into the refreshing and buoyant waters of experience.

During the following week I went again to that academy, and, mounting my horse on a second attempt, I alternately trotted and walked round the arena for the space of forty minutes, knocking over two posts this time, but in no other way suffering mishap or inconvenience ; so that, when I left the building, it was with a strengthened conviction that those who say horsemanship is difficult to acquire, after the age of forty, don't know what they are talking about.

To be astride a walking horse had become an experience no more discomposing than to be seated in a chair. Trotting, now the novelty of the sensation had worn off, proved to be a matter of rising and sinking in an orderly routine quite consistent with one's balance and safety. But it occurred to me that a horse is capable of a third method of progression ; and, having dismounted after my second lesson, I spoke to the riding-master about it.

“ What about galloping ? ” I asked. “ But, of



OUR HORSES

course, that could not be done in a small space like this."

"You think not?" laughed the riding-master; and straightway he swung up into the saddle and began vigorously exhorting and smiting the horse, which upreared and plunged and then set off at a furious pace that caused the tan to fly. I did not feel moved to follow my master's

example, nor did he suggest my doing so. Trotting, I mentally decided, was good enough for me.

After enjoying, a few days later, a further twenty minutes on horseback, I went no more to the riding-school; for other matters urgently claimed my time, and I judged that, having regard to the advantage conferred by those first three lessons, I could afford to dispense with the others.

Meanwhile my brother let me know, from time to time, how he was faring in the saddle. Living far from any riding-school, he had taken his equestrian education into his own hands. Having borrowed an old horse, and hired a young man to hold it, he was getting his experience in a country lane not much frequented by the public. And, as this narrative will show, success attended even that method of learning to ride a horse.

Here then at last I conclude a long digression for which, in view of the practical purpose it is intended to serve, I hope I may be pardoned. Let us now revert to the moment when, in the centre of the town of Haifa, my brother and I, accompanied by our dragoman, found four horses standing in charge of a disreputable-looking muleteer.

After looking at his watch, Solomon allotted one of the greys to each of us, and, having

mounted his own horse, said it was time to be moving on. As to the method of our departure, however, his idea proved at variance with our intention.

The streets of Haifa looked scarce six feet wide; their irregular pavement of rocks and stones promised a treacherous foothold; and the place was alive with picturesque pedestrians. My brother and I declined to mount our beasts amid such a complication of unfavourable conditions. We led them through those congested alleys, following in the wake of our mounted companions; and in a few minutes we had passed beyond the region of human habitations and were looking upon a perspective of flat sea-shore, with the blue of the Mediterranean margined, on our left, by golden shingle and silvery stretches that merged, on our right, into the pale tints of sand-hills half smothered with vegetation.

The muleteer, obviously recognizing the duties of groom as falling within his office, dismounted on the open ground to see the two travellers comfortably in the saddle. Resisting a first impulse to insert my right foot in the stirrup—a proceeding which, if appointed routine be otherwise persisted in, must result in the equestrian bestriding his horse with his face to its tail—I mounted safely, as did my brother, and next minute we were all proceeding on our way at a

decorous walking pace. But the two chestnuts, whether at the dictation of their riders I do not know, walked more briskly than the two greys, so that Solomon and the muleteer were presently several hundred yards ahead of my brother and myself.

Our winding course followed, not indeed a road, but a well-defined track, which had its justification in conducting us over a bridge of rough timber spanning a little river. Sometimes we trod the level turf, sometimes our route lay across a wide expanse of firm sand. Nor were foreign touches lacking to heighten the charm of a scene so reminiscent of holidays at home. We saw, a little way inland, a dainty grove of palm-trees; while our interest was further quickened by the zoological experience—destined to become so familiar—of meeting travellers mounted on camels.

To be journeying so comfortably in the sunshine, along that sparkling coast, made my heart feel light within me. But it was, I think, more particularly the sea-air that played havoc with my discretion.

I thought it would be fine to have a trot—a trot such as I had practised at the riding-school. So, to rouse my horse out of his sluggish pace, I gave him a gentle prod with my right heel.

The result was instantaneous and deplorable. In a great rush of air, I was bumped, and

bumped, and again bumped. The brute was off at a gallop—that, of course, I knew. But how I succeeded in retaining my seat in the saddle I do not know. That I pulled at the reins, however, I am convinced. Nay, I afterwards had a memory of pulling at the reins with a violence so callous that, even in the throes of terror and upheaval, I was dimly apprehensive of doing the animal some physical injury. So far from that being the case, however, he continued his frantic career until the startled dragoman and muleteer, with much shouted exhortation in Arabic, interposed their horses plump in his path and thus brought him, panting, to a standstill.

I had to accept Solomon's reproaches for the part I admitted to have played in goading the beast out of his walking gait. I must not suppose, he warned me, that a horse fresh from a two-days' rest could resist an invitation to stretch his limbs. As for trotting—pshaw! this was an animal of spirit. Nor would he credit my testimony that I had taken proper measures in the emergency, I may have thought I was tugging at the reins, he said, but I could not have done so really, or the horse would have stopped. Indeed he was so positive about it that I almost came to have doubts on the subject myself.

Making my apologies for having unwittingly disturbed the serenity of our progress, I returned

to my pedestal of horseflesh and uncertainty, and we resumed our journey towards the little town that figured so prettily, with its foreground of trees, at the end of the curve of coast. It was Acre, the dragoman had told me, and our destination for that day.

There could be no more passive rider than I had now become. Not so much as a finger did I lay on my too responsive horse. But in less than half an hour he was filled anew with the spirit of haste. It was a near thing with me not to be shocked from the saddle when, without warning, my crazy quadruped leapt once more into an unrequested gallop. There, then, was poor John Gilpin, his feet forsaken by the stirrups, clinging to the horse by what unauthorized means his memory lacks the data to describe, and probably cutting as sorry a figure as ever astonished the sea-fowl on the shores of the Mediterranean.

They heard us coming—those two experienced, phlegmatic horsemen riding on ahead—and, bestirring themselves in the same wise as before, they again caused my headstrong steed to halt. Then I learnt that, mutiny being contagious, my brother's horse had started galloping in imitation of mine. But my brother's horse—docile, acceptable creature—had consented to the restraint of the reins.

Fifty yards inland were sand-hills which, being

overgrown with bushes, offered pleasant shade from the bright sunshine. An ideal place, I suggested, for lunch. In simple Anglo-Saxon, my knees were shaking. And when Solomon and the muleteer had spread a cloth on the mossy bank, and deposited thereon cold tongue and chicken and buttered rolls, with oranges, figs, and walnut kernels; and when my brother and I were squatting at that repast, and my perturbation was yielding to the influence of nourishment—I ventilated the grievance that lay heavy on my mind.

This time it was no use for any one to suggest that I had not pulled at the reins—for I had. I begged to state an emphatic opinion that a wrong sort of horse had been provided for me. When my brother and I gave instructions to Messrs. Cook in London, we distinctly mentioned that, lacking experience in the saddle, we did not look for speed or high-bred action in our mounts; we wanted two old stagers who would just jog along peacefully and do as they were told. For my part, as I informed the dragoman, I should have been quite content with a venerable, rheumatic beast. At which he smiled. At which—with my present knowledge of the ground to be covered in Palestine—I also can smile.

Solomon had been conferring privately with the muleteer—whose name, by the way, he

mentioned as Mahomet—and the upshot of those deliberations was now communicated to us. The horse was right enough, Mahomet averred; though by an oversight—for which he took the blame and offered his apologies—the animal had been given a European bridle, instead of the Arab pattern to which he was accustomed. The fault should be remedied on the morrow, and for the rest of that day's journey, if I would pardon the indignity, my horse should be tethered to his.

This proposal won my ready assent, and during the remainder of our journey to Acre, two yards of rope hung between my horse and that of the muleteer. Thus I answered to the aspect of a captured brigand, or rather—I hope Mahomet would excuse me for saying—a brigand's captive. However, let occasional wayfarers stare their hardest, the arrangement suited me, giving that sense of personal security without which the choicest scenery is offered to unseeing eyes.



ACRE

CHAPTER VI

Acre and Afterwards

Our transplanted camp—Curiosity sternly repressed—Historical predecessors—Acre at night—Venerable battlements—Peering at murderers—Remarkable rain—We resume our journey—An accomplished muleteer—Our guides lose the way—Conflicting advisers—Injuring the oppressed—A hurricane of hail—My lonely stroll—Flowers and solitude—A strange meeting—Unsavoury Shefa-Amr—A message from the Governor.

ACRE, as it lay ahead of us in the twilight, looked so interesting that, when we had arrived within a stone's throw of its venerable walls, I felt the thrill of one about to be surprised by strange sights. But the sight I next minute beheld, so far from being strange, was only surprising because so familiar.

Solomon, at the head of our party, had abruptly quitted the straight path to lead us up a grassy mound; and on the plateau we found the identical encampment—tents, men, mules and charcoal fire—we had left on the sea-

shore at Haifa. Nay, on entering our sleeping-apartment my brother and I found all our personal belongings just where we had placed them ; and already the cloth was laid, and the candles burning, in our pleasant dining-pavilion.

Enough daylight remained to reveal the summit of the mound as circular and spacious ; and, while waiting for dinner to be served, I strolled off to explore our new environment. Nor was it long before, having come to the limit of level ground, I confronted a group of men and boys standing, full of passive curiosity, on the dip of the land. But Solomon came quickly after me, to utter confidential warnings anent the wisdom of taking no notice of those people, as to whose probity, it was clear, he entertained grave misgivings. Having whispered to me in English, he shouted at them in Arabic, and shouted in a tone of such stern reproof that I was curious to learn the purport of his words.

“I tell them,” he explained, “that we not stand any nonsense from them, and if they come nearer to the tents by only one yard we send them to prison.”

It seemed rather a high-handed way of treating people who, though I must admit they looked sullen, presumably had as much right on that hill as we had. I should certainly, had I been given any voice in the matter, have favoured a more tolerant, not to say courteous,

attitude towards the inhabitants of a country where, after all, we were uninvited guests. But I took it that Solomon knew best.

It seemed—for my companion's talk became historical on our way back to the tents—that we were by no means the first persons who had encamped on that eminence, Richard Cœur de Lion and Napoleon Bonaparte having both been there before us. Our attitude towards the inhabitants at any rate compared favourably with theirs. Which reminds me, if the Bible gives us only peaceful glimpses of the Acre of antiquity, the later history of that “key to Palestine” is an awful record of siege upon siege, with human slaughter unthinkable. But over its gloomy history there broods the glamour of mediæval romance. For, fed by the blood of the Crusaders, chivalry blossomed at Acre.

Going forth on foot after dinner, we soon came to a grim old entrance-gate set in a great battlemented wall which, if time had bitten deeply into its crumbling surface, was built of a solid thickness that defied the centuries. Pointing with his stick, Solomon showed us hyssop growing on the top of those venerable fortifications. He was also concerned that we should notice a structural feature of the wall, to wit, narrow apertures which, besides serving as sheltered places of observation, gave opportunity for discharging bolts at any invader who

sought to force the gate. But it was their name, and not their purpose, to which he drew our attention, claiming that one of such slits in the masonry was the "eye of a needle" intended to be associated, in hallowed language of imagery, with the passage of a camel.

Solomon's memory, indeed, as later occasions served to demonstrate, was richly stored with Syrian folk-lore; but since speculative erudition lies outside the scope of this record, I should not have quoted his testimony save for an indirect significance that belonged to it.

As we stood there in the yellow lamplight, surrounded by shadows and mystery, gowned figures came and went with silent tread; and, on looking through the archway, I saw other gowned figures just within the city, squatting on the ground beneath a canopy of reeds and sticks. Those people of to-day were linked by tradition with the people who dwelt at Acre eighteen hundred years ago, as in times more remote. And Solomon's words served to deepen a feeling that things as we saw them must, in general aspect, reproduce the image of the Acre of old. For one stone wall is like another, and the principle of an unembellished arch admits of no variety. As for the clothing of that solemn, brown-skinned people, it was so rich in archaic suggestion that the imagination instinctively accepted it as a style inherited

from early ages. Any alteration in that respect seemed scarce more probable than that the blue sky and sunshine of Palestine, and its night-time firmament of stars, had changed since the days when Jesus saw them.

Having entered at the gate, we soon became aware of an element in the population that had been lacking at Haifa. Turkish soldiers, armed with long guns, stood here and there on guard, and we saw others passing through the streets in squads. For Acre, true to its history and fortifications, remains a military city.

Our saunter introduced us to much that was picturesque ; but one place we saw left a shadow on our minds. Coming to a gate, we looked between its iron bars at human creatures who carried themselves with a subdued and dismal air. In skinny, suppliant hands, they held out specimens of ornamental woodwork for our inspection. It was a prison, and they were murderers—Solomon said—and travellers were wont to purchase examples of their handicraft. My brother and I, however, felt no desire for mementoes of misery, the more so as our glance at the articles failed to discern in them any redeeming grace of colour or design.

Passing to pleasanter experiences, we saw men by the wayside selling doves ; we went in and out among winding bazaars which, if dirty under foot, were full of Oriental charm ; and,

peeping in at the Mosque of Jezzaz, we beheld a courtyard paved with choice mosaic, where a fountain stood amid palms and peace. These sights were all strange and precious to my brother and myself, if wholly unremarkable to Solomon the Syrian. And thus fate seemed aiming at an emotional adjustment as between him and ourselves when, a little later, something happened that he found amazing and we considered commonplace enough.

It began to rain—a state of things, it would seem, to which Palestine is unaccustomed at that time of year. What is more, it continued to rain, so that Solomon, finding himself getting wet, was all in a fidget until we set off for home. For home, I say, though in truth that word slipped unauthorized from my pen. But certainly our tents earned the compliment that night, for though the rain persisted in heavy volume, and violent wind arose, our canvas was proof against those attacks.

Of Acre we had fuller knowledge on the following day, when we pushed our explorations through ancient cellars and dungeons that brought us into view of the dainty little harbour, where small sailing craft were tossing at anchor in the sprightly breeze. Hard by, heaps of stones and mortar were associated with battered remnants of walls—it being manifest that the inhabitants had not tidied up that part of their



Harold Copping,

At Shefa Amr.

town since the last bombardment, which occurred in 1840.

On espying travellers, certain youthful Syrians came upon the scene, and, with great wealth of gesture, pointed to iron missiles embedded in the masonry, these missiles—according to Solomon's interpretation of the youngsters' talk—being shells fired from British men-of-war. Those lads of Acre, who recognized us for Englishmen, apparently wanted to know—if one might judge by an air of expectation in their bearing—what we were going to do about it; and in the circumstances I felt that a bishlik between them was the least reparation I could offer.

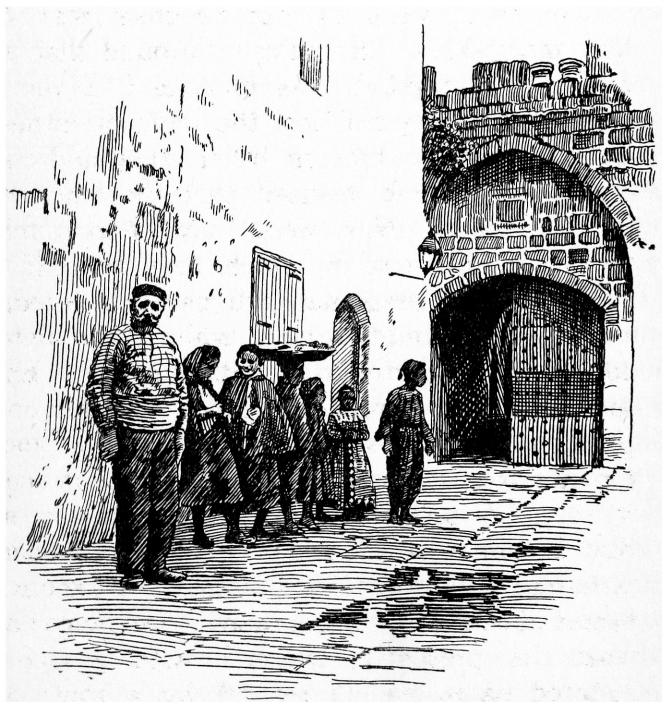
When, at ten o'clock next morning, we emerged for the last time through the gate of Acre, it seemed that many days had gone by since first we came to that city. Yet, if I felt we had stayed there longer than we had, I shared my brother's regret that we could stay there no longer. We had been able only to glance at scenes we fain would have lingered over. But in advocating a judicious allotment of our time, Solomon uttered counsel of which we recognized the weight; and, as had been arranged at breakfast, there on the road was Mahomet with the horses. Thus was I called upon to resume the practice of an art towards which my relations had become somewhat complicated.

On looking at my steed, I saw a curb of new shape in his mouth. But also I thought I saw the old madness in his eyes. So, letting dignity go to the winds, I decided once more to be led, if the muleteer would consent to resume the office of custodian. For, as I comforted my self-esteem by reflecting, I had come to Palestine to see the country, and not to place my life at the mercy of an animal whose sanity I doubted.

Mahomet offered no objection to my request, and soon our horses were walking away from Acre with us upon their backs. This time we journeyed inland, over ground of a rising gradient, and presently I saw, on turning my head, the blue expanse of the Mediterranean lying behind us, while, away to the right, Mount Carmel loomed green and lofty. But the scenery did not monopolize my attention. I found myself regarding Mahomet with an interest that ripened into admiration—admiration both of himself and his horse. The brave beast, in addition to its human burden, was carrying a pair of saddle-bags that were all abulge with my brother's sketching paraphernalia, our macintoshes, two cameras and tripods, the lunch, and an assortment of feeding and cooking utensils.

For Mahomet to bestride his quadruped in the usual manner was out of the question. He had

to balance himself how best he could while sitting with his legs stretched straight and his heels in the region of the horse's mane. To be situated so precariously on that heap of swaying luggage would have tried the nerve and patience of most persons, even without the nuisance of having another horse on one's hands, or rather heels; but Mahomet comported him-



ONE OF THE CITY GATES, ACRE

self with jaunty indifference, accompanied by snatches of song.

Every now and then he would lean back to flick my horse with the end of the tow rope; not because the beast had done anything to deserve it, but merely, as I gathered, by way of reminder that, whatever it might think of the gentleman on its back, the person on ahead was its master.

The even tenor of our progress was not long maintained. Arriving on ground that was soft and saturated, Solomon and Mahomet realized that they had lost the way; or rather—to judge by the tone in which they addressed one another—each realized that the other had lost the way. Nor were they of one mind as to the direction in which they were likely to find it; the dragoman indignantly proceeding across some ploughed land, while the muleteer continued doggedly to ford the morass. Each soon varied his direction, and some rather complicated evolutions occupied them for about ten minutes, at the end of which time it began to rain. A more favourable circumstance was that Solomon descried, not very far away, some picturesque figures with a donkey, to whom he hastened in search of geographical guidance; and when he presently returned, with a face of restored calm, we all set off by a route the strangers had recommended.

Nor did we suffer any further hindrance until, on falling in with certain other picturesque figures, this time accompanied by camels, the muleteer, not to miss so favourable an opportunity for confirming the information already received, asked them if we were going right for Shefa-Amr. And no knowledge of Arabic was necessary to gather that, in their opinion, we were going hopelessly wrong.

Once more Solomon and Mahomet entered upon a conference that had much in common with a controversy, and whereof the upshot surprised me. For, setting his face against both routes indicated by our conflicting advisers, Solomon led us off on an independent course of his own devising. Its chief demerit, in my eyes, was that it lay across an area on which rows of barley seedlings were showing green and conspicuous against the brown earth. But when I called out to him that we were assuredly going over somebody's cultivated land, he replied that he knew we were, but it didn't matter; his philosophy on the subject being, as I was afterwards to learn, that the meek pastoral people of Palestine were already so oppressed by the Turk that such a little thing as trampling down their crops did not count—a view of the case, as it seemed to me, that had no very sure foundation in ethics.

A second, but by no means secondary, claim

on my attention was made by the rain, which was now descending in considerable volume. Indeed, for a climate that had not had much practice, so to speak, it was a very creditable downpour. What with the wind, and the chilliness caused by rain-drops trickling down one's neck, we might have been in the Highlands of Scotland. Both Solomon and Mahomet, by some ingenious adaptation of their Eastern toilet, had become cloaked figures; and, in the circumstances, my brother and I felt justified in calling a halt, even in that barley-field, to demand and don our macintoshes.

On presently coming in sight of a great stretch of rising ground, our two guides were agreed in believing that they knew where they were; and, fraternal relations being re-established by this discovery, my brother and I announced that, after so much zigzagging about in quest of a lost trail, we were feeling rather hungry. However, pleading the need for shelter, Solomon decided that we must not have our lunch just yet; and, ten minutes later, we felt glad he had taken that view.

For the rain became tropical, and was accompanied by hail, which pelted us so unmercifully at the propulsion of a head wind that our distressed horses declined to face it, and were reduced to the curious expedient of walking sideways—a course in which they persisted

until, on the downpour assuming hurricane violence, they came to a dead stop. And there they stood, quaking with bowed heads, during the fury of that deluge.

The storm ended abruptly, and four saturated travellers resumed their journey, coming presently to a short length of ancient stone wall—the one feature of variety in a lonely landscape. So there they halted for lunch.

Probably most persons, when travelling through a strange country in a train, have felt how much they would like to get out and walk. It all looks so interesting that one wants to get closer—to be inside those scenes, instead of merely passing them by. On horseback I had been having much the same sense of opportunities denied. And so, finishing lunch before the others, I decided to take a short stroll. To be alone with Palestine for awhile, to feel its herbage under the soles of my feet, to hold some of its flowers in the palm of my hand—those were the experiences I was longing for.

An open stretch of treeless country lay on our left, as also behind and ahead, along the route we were traversing; but immediately on the right was rising ground that shut off the view, and endowed what lay beyond with the fascination of the unknown. I walked up that slope.

Nor had I gone far before, as on looking back

I discovered, the billowy contour of the hill had placed my companions out of sight. And in no direction was any man, or beast, or habitation visible. I stood alone in the silence, with only the sky and the green earth about me; and in those moments of perfect peace I was indeed in the Holy Land.

Onward I went, very glad. The grass was at that stage of advanced and rapid growth when the unbroken blades are vivid green, and the slender tall stalks are burdened with their trembling trusses of seed. Amid the grass were brilliant flowers—anemones, marguerites, and bugloss. As I walked, the thought of snakes came to me, so that I trod cautiously, with my eyes to the ground. And thus it happened that the approach of a human being was unnoted by me until, on chancing to raise my head, I was startled to see him—a strange figure in dilapidated vestments, a man of dark visage, who held in his right hand a great curved blade of shining steel, and was bearing down on me with long strides.

Being unprovided with so much as a walking-stick, I recognized the pathetic disadvantage at which I should stand were his behaviour to prove as warlike as his looks. A few anxious seconds later, and we had met.

Had I known the necessary Arabic words, I should certainly have wished him good after-

noon, little as that stern, impassive face invited a friendly greeting. We met, I say ; but it was scarcely a meeting. Neither of us stopped, or paused, or smiled, or spoke. And we passed so close to one another that his brown garments almost touched me. When, a minute later, I turned my head, his long legs had carried him out of sight beyond a brow of the hill.

I wonder why that husbandman with his sickle—for, on reflection, I decided he could be nothing else—was moving with such expedition on so straight a course, like a scout who was following a trail. And I wonder how, behind that mask of stolid indifference, he accounted for finding a lonely Western foreigner loitering about in that solitude. For my part, it was as though I had met some stealthy, dumb being from another planet.

On rejoining my companions, and relating the experience, I had to submit to earnest upbraidings from Solomon, who hinted at robbery and violence as dangers to be feared from his countrymen, in whom, it would seem, he had little confidence.

Our afternoon journey lay, for the most part, across bare hills where, on sunny banks, corn-flowers and iris bloomed in profusion. Evening had come when, after a long spell of uphill travelling, we entered upon a path rudely paved with stones. Still ascending, we were soon in a malodorous region of mud houses where the

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narrow roadway was slippery with filth, and our ascent was watched by an inert, untidy people. We were wending our way into a dirty and dismal town that looked uncivilized and smelt pestilential.

At the top of the hill, on a small area of open ground, we found our encampment, surrounded by a boisterous mob of slovenly juveniles, who at once received attentions from Solomon. His dignified remonstrances failed, however, to arrest the chorus of ribald defiance, and it was in great indignation and hot haste that he went off to ventilate our grievance in official quarters.

Of those representations we perceived the value when he presently showed us a card that bore the words: "Saied Mohammad Salim, al-Qunsi, Governor of Shefa-Amr." On turning it, we read this reassuring message:

"Mr. Thos. Cook and Son—I have sent you two soldier for serving you. Respect our sincere affection."

At once the populace ceased to trouble us; and we dined and slept that night in peace.



OUR FIRST VIEW OF NAZARETH

CHAPTER VII

Nazareth

Luxury in barbarism—Domestic life in a tent—Loading mule—
The Protestant school at Shefa-Amr—Visiting the hill tombs—
Travelling amid birds and flowers—Wayside friends—Looking
down at Nazareth—Gentle-mannered girls and boys—A city
of kindness and smiles—The leper—Mary's Well—Primitive
carpenters' shops—Distressing pretensions—The Protestant
Orphanage—A missionary of the minority.

NEXT morning found me in a state of glad-
ness and wonder, touched just lightly by
a guilty feeling.

I had come to Palestine—the most interesting
country in the world—and still did I feel the
thrill of a momentous experience. Nay, that
thrill had been quickened at sight of this little
town on the top of a rock-strewn hill. Yet,
with its rude dwellings, its uncouth and jeering
rabble, and its crooked byways of filth and loose

stones, Shefa-Amr was appalling rather than pleasing. Indeed, to my European eyes, it was, in all externals, frankly barbarous. And from a recognition of that very fact came the hint of personal uneasiness that accompanied my grateful exaltation.

This is what happened. I was awakened by the voice of Solomon, saying he had brought our warm water, and breakfast would soon be ready; whereupon, throwing aside my mosquito canopy, I beheld his cheerful countenance, in a setting of morning sunshine, at the entrance to the tent. Standing on the wide stretch of comfortable Turkish rug, we had use of ewers and mirrors and brushes, and all other accustomed amenities of the toilet, as set out in orderly duplicate array on twin tables draped with crimson.

And anon we had passed from one commodious pavilion to another, and were seated at a repast, spread on a snow-white tablecloth, in which grilled kidneys, boiled eggs, and sardines were associated with hot rolls, buttered toast, a choice of preserves, a dish of delicious Jaffa oranges, and coffee served in a silver urn. And a few yards away, and all round about us, was—barbarism.

It did not seem fair. Who was I—and, for the matter of that, who was my brother—that we, mere uninvited visitors in the land of that

backward people, should be singled out for the enjoyment of all these selfish corporalities? How came it that we could not go a few hours without creature comforts that these poor Moslems and Druses had lacked for centuries? Was it not enough that we had lived all our days in the lap of Western civilization, without bringing the personal luxuries of that civilization into remote places of the East? And bringing them, be it noted, in exaggerated profusion; for I would ask the reader to believe that, in mine own home in England, I am wont to break my fast under conditions of greater simplicity than are represented by the appetizing alternatives enumerated above.

And if some misgiving underlay my enjoyment of the good things provided for us, the matter of how they were provided was still a mystery to me. Indeed, the supreme interest of being in Palestine had left me incurious and unobservant concerning minor matters. Yet it happened that, ere we departed from Shefa-Amr, I was to have some insight into the elaborate routine on which our domestic affairs reposed.

On emerging from the tent, my brother, entranced by the view of the valley, straightway fetched paints and easel and got to work. Then Solomon, on learning how much I should like to visit the Protestant school, bade me wait while he went first to learn if the children were there.

And while I was waiting, my attention was engaged by the vigorous activities of four of our servants. They were collapsing the tents, and doubling up the areas of canvas into huge bundles. Already one mule was, as it seemed, in process of burial beneath the conglomeration of bundles, boxes, trunks, and poles that were being built about him. The uncomplaining beast stood firm, as the basis of the structure—the guiding principle with the men manifestly being that each hundredweight or so added on one side must be promptly counterpoised by a corresponding supplement on the other. Otherwise the balance of the poor mule would be endangered. To my inexperience it seemed strange that his spine did not snap.

Solomon coming back, he and I went together up one of the winding alleys, slippery with mire, until we came to a gate in a wall of loose stones. This gave entrance to a little enclosure which, if evidence of cultivation were limited, was nevertheless a garden, and therefore a welcome thing to see in grey, forbidding Shefa-Amr. In the house an English lady welcomed us, and soon was confessing how hard a fight she had of it against superstition and mental darkness. But the light of kindness in her eyes spoke of hope in her heart, and I knew I need not pity her.

Shefa-Amr she identified with Haphram of

the Book of Joshua and Shafram of the time of Christ ; and I was enjoined to see the rock tombs on the hill-side, whither, it seemed, this gentle lady often went to sit and meditate, and watch pretty little birds of which, as she was fain smilingly to admit, she did not know the genus. Also she told me of the discovery, in one of the tombs, of the glass image of a man, and of the awe and terror with which local fanaticism had beheld it. We went into the schoolroom, and I retain the mental picture of fifty little children sitting, solemn and subdued, and saying the Lord's Prayer in Arabic.

Returning to our camping-ground, I found the long line of our laden quadrupeds—five mules and two sturdy donkeys—about to depart down the hill, in the custody of two muleteers on foot (wild-looking men in ragged brown raiment), and with Simon the cook on horseback, and George the waiter squatting atop boxes and baggage on one of the beasts of burden.

Our own four horses were tethered on the camping - ground, and presently — when my brother's sketch was done — we released and mounted them, and set off in the wake of our vanished caravan, Mahomet (his bulging saddlebags containing sketching materials, cameras, and lunch) leading the way. Past hedges of cactus and walls of heaped stones, we followed

the winding descent to the bottom of the valley, when my brother, Solomon, and I handed over our horses to the muleteer, that he might mind them while we were gone to see the tombs.

In that tangle of weeds it were easy enough to miss the lowly mouths of those ancient sepulchres. Stooping, we peered into roomy chambers hollowed out of the solid rock, (chambers with divisions and recesses), while within and without we saw worn and moss-grown carvings of crosses, lions, and grape-vines growing in pots.

Once more in the saddle, we soon were out of sight of Shefa-Amr, and well started on our journey. The recent heavy rains had left the low lands swampy, and for a mile or so our sure-footed animals made their slow way through water and yielding mud. Gaining higher ground, we found our path encumbered by stones, with many a dainty flower growing by the wayside.

It was a glorious landscape. On our right the far sweep of Mount Carmel loomed purple and imposing. On our left, in receding depths of blue, were the hills of Galilee, lacking only heather in their resemblance to the Scotch Highlands. Hawks floated stationary against the sky, dapper little wrens and wagtails took wing at our approach, an occasional eagle, strong and solitary, crossed our path, and I saw some



Harold Copping.

Where we stopped for lunch—between Shefa Amr and Nazareth.

dark-coloured butterflies. But the flowers were my chief delight.

Out of that rich brown earth, indeed, sprang a luxuriant vegetation spangled with various blooms. Single anemones were the frequent spots of vivid scarlet. Clusters of white and mauve cyclamen grew among the lichen-splashed rocks. Cornflowers were the dark-blue patches, dwarf iris the light. And the banks were pink and pretty with cistus, which some persons identify with the Rose of Sharon, though perhaps the narcissus has a stronger claim to the distinction.

Reaching undulations, we passed many cultivated areas, and went through a little copse, fragrant of earth and leaves, that might have been in Surrey. Then we came to a large pond, bordered by a stretch of grass that offered good grazing for our horses. So here we stopped for lunch; and, after the meal, I went on tiptoe to the water's edge, curious to learn what manner of birds were uttering the strange medley of cries and pipings. Frogs proved to be the explanation.

It took but a few minutes to gather a glowing bouquet such as, in England, must have come from a hot-house. Here and there on the grass I noticed brown patches that proved, on a near scrutiny, thousands of little caterpillars wriggling on glistening webs. Standing motionless, I saw

small rodents at their excavations. Beyond the pond, seven browsing camels moved sluggishly, all legs and neck. Their custodian, an Arab lad in venerable rags of various hues, stood fifty yards away, idly slashing the reeds with his stick. Two middle-aged Arabs approached along the path, driving several lame brown horses; and when they espied Mahomet resting on the bank, they went and squatted beside him. One unwrapped his hookah, charged it with water from the pond, and fell a-smoking, the three men hobnobbing in Arabic like old friends.

On resuming our journey, we had much difficult ground to cover. Sometimes our horses would be staggering up and down the rocky bed of a dry water-course. Also we had to cross slopes that were strewn liberally with boulders. And so in time we came to a hill where allotment gardens (as they seemed) were marked off by trim lines of cactus.

On a sudden, when we had reached the top, my brother and I cried out in joyful amazement at the scene which lay before us.

Down there we saw a little city bathed in warm afternoon sunshine—its square white houses shining like caskets carved in ivory, with olive groves of tender grey, pretty domes and a few red roofs, and rows of conspicuous cypress trees. Pearls on an emerald background were

outlying houses dotted about the slopes ; for fourteen hills compassed this little city about, save where, right ahead, the eye swept on over an expanse of flat green country that died away in the soft tones of great distance.

It was Nazareth. The view opened out across the Plain of Esdraelon. Also we saw Mount Gilboa. And, far away, snow-clad Hermon rose opalescent into the heavens.

My brother and I surrendered our horses to Solomon and Mahomet. They knew why. They were smiling their appreciation of our enthusiasm. Then, unhampered, and with nothing to divide our attention, we walked down the sandy path that winds in and out among the rocks, leading to the little city below. Nor had we gone far when, on passing a projection in the hill-side, we came upon two girls with happy faces ; and we had our welcome to Nazareth in their pretty little curtseys and frank, sweet smiles. At this, with Haifa and Acre and Shefa-Amr fresh in our memory, we went on our way marvelling.

Farther down, when we came among the houses, we saw pretty children going this way and that, alert and glad. They also gave us their smiles. Men and women turned to look at us with interested and friendly faces.

Our tents were standing in the city, on a vacant area traversed by a road and facing an

ancient garden wall. I saw little lizards sporting among the herbs and mosses that grew in the interstices of that wall. Demure girls came presently to our tents, carrying dainty lace collars and silk scarves which (as we were to learn) they themselves had made; and timidly, bashfully, they brought these their wares to our notice when they deemed us sufficiently at leisure. Handsome boys arrived later to submit coins, tear bottles, amethysts, bronze bracelets, agates, and other relics from the tombs.

My brother and I were full of astonishment at the sweet faces and gentle manners of the girls and boys of Nazareth. And it was music in our ears to hear their many words of English, spoken very prettily. Reasonable prices were asked, and gratefully accepted, for the things they had to sell—welcome change from the extortionate claims whiningly attempted elsewhere.

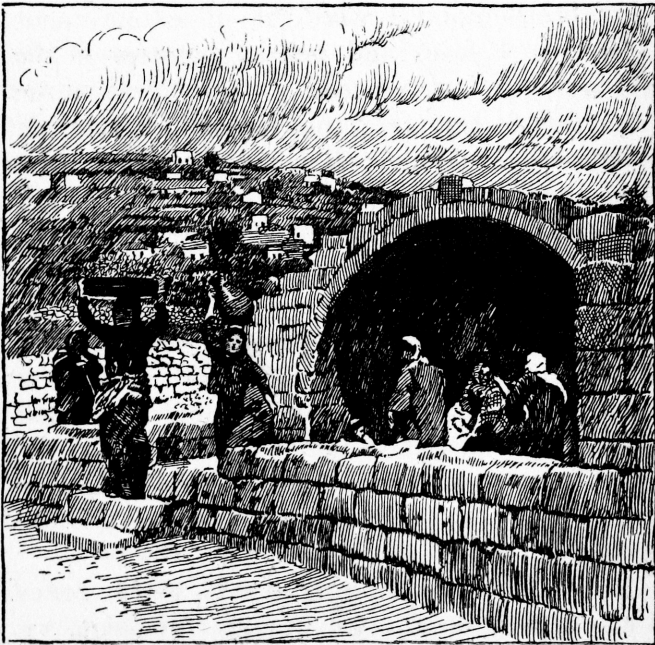
After dinner it was still bright twilight, and we saw a leper approaching slowly along the road. When he came before our tents he stood leaning on his stick; and even that sadly disfigured countenance was illumined by a kindly smile. And he went his way, asking for no baksheesh.

Church bells were ringing in soft, silvery tones as we walked to Mary's Well; and there we saw women—lovely in flowing, coloured robes—

come with their pitchers, marvellously poised on head, to take toll of the shining waters.

It is pleasant to look, and to look again, at that arched recess of venerable masonry, with the steps across its little protecting wall. Well sites endure throughout the centuries. Jesus and His mother probably drew water there.

On the sunken stone floor of Mary's Well, when we returned there in the morning, girls



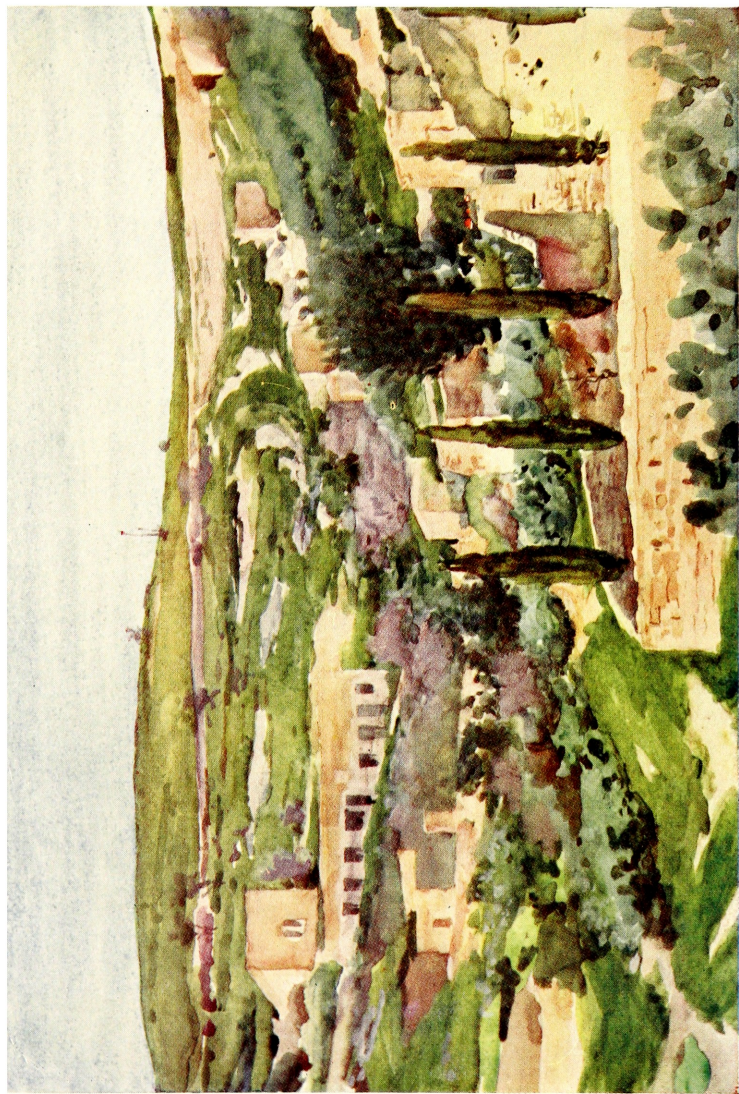
MARY'S WELL

and women were washing their clothes with busy treading and beating.

In narrow streets of steep gradient were many little shops—hollow spaces in the wall, picturesque and quaint ; and we saw the butcher, the baker, the barber, and the man who sells nuts, spices, and olives. The strange little market had a golden floor of oranges. Going farther, we found two carpenters' shops where primitive methods survived. Lacking benches and planes, the toilers sat upon the floor, fashioning ploughs out of untrimmed wood.

Hyssop was growing over a rain-pipe of the Annunciation Church, and on looking down one of the three wells in the courtyard, I found the stonework beautiful with maidenhair fern. But, alas, to go over this and the other Latin churches—and it is customary for visitors to be shown these sights—was to be distressed by pretensions which, if excusable in the Middle Ages, add nothing to the sanctity of Nazareth in the present day. In truth, after seeing “the Table of Christ,” “Mary’s Kitchen,” “Joseph’s Workshop,” and “the miraculously suspended pillar,” we wished to erase their images from our minds. Nor was this difficult. For the charm of that little city fully engaged our attention.

And there was a delicious mystery that I wanted to fathom. What made the people so human and kind, and why were the children so



Nazareth.

Harold Copping.

happy? How came it that Shefa-Amr and Nazareth differed as night from day? Why was the city of Jesus' boyhood just what one would wish it to be? Where was the modern source of light—the light we saw reflected in the smiles of the little ones?

With these questions on my lips, I called upon the clergyman of the Church Missionary Society, whom I found in a room that might have been the library of an English vicarage.

"Why," he cried, enjoying my perplexity, "you evidently have not been to the Orphanage." Two minutes later, under Solomon's escort, I was on my way thither.

Going up many steps, we found the Orphanage standing among cypresses high up a hill. Seventy girls, with cheeks like peaches, were saying their English reading-lessons. The vast dormitory shone with whiteness. I drank deep of the perfume of great wallflowers growing among lemons in the beautiful garden. Birds flew in and out of the class-rooms chirping and welcome.

I had seen, but still I did not understand. For was not the overwhelming majority of the population Moslem, Greek Church, and Latin? Talking again with that joyous, enthusiastic missionary, I put question upon question, and so found my way to the heart of the mystery.

In Nazareth there is a large Protestant school

for boys, and three for girls, besides that glorious Orphanage, which, by the by, is supported by the Society for the Promotion of Female Education in the East—an organization whose spirit is more beautiful than its name. And in Nazareth there is a Protestant church, where kindness and love are practised and preached, though the missionary did not say so. But he did tell me of the eagerness of Greek Catholics to be married there.

In a word, Moslems, Greek Catholics, and Latins hold the small Protestant minority in deep reverence, and send their children to be educated at its academies. Also (and here again I quote his testimony) they ask its prayers of intercession at times of fear, as when, a few years ago, cholera came. To me it seems that—in essentials, as distinguished from names—the minority has become the majority.

These were the missionary's last words to me as we parted on the hill-top: "Yes; tell them of beautiful Nazareth. And I am so glad you like the flowers. Ah! when that slope is white with narcissus!"

Then we went forward on our travels. And he returned to the little city.

CHAPTER VIII

Galilean Villages

An entrancing panorama—Reineh and its well—The woman, the pitcher, and the baby—Cana—Acres blue with bugloss—Flights of storks—My horse goes lame—A loose saddle—Kind lads of Lubieh—A wounded bird—My brother's handsome model—Wine-presses cut in the rock—The dead lizard—A howling hyena—Why the men were missing—Our aggressive defender—Menacing appeal for baksheesh—Jackals and mosquitoes.

WE saw again the fair panorama we had seen on arriving at Nazareth. And now we were riding down into it, following a rough track that marks a boundary in sacred geography. For on our left was Zebulon, and to the right of us was Naphtali. But it was all one lovely landscape.

Since the morning was far advanced when we departed from Nazareth, two miles of travelling brought us to the hour for lunch, and to a favourable spot for the purpose. Mary's well—which had stamped its lovely image on my mind as, I think, an indelible memory—had here a rural fellow. We halted for our midday meal beside the well of Reineh.

I begrudge the balance of probability that gives Kefr Kenna the stronger title to be identified as Cana of Galilee ; for over Reineh, as we saw it, there brooded a beautiful spirit of peace.

The well—or, as we should say, the spring—is seen as a hollow of masonry in the hill-side. Entering, you face a grey old wall, partly recessed beneath an arch, and crested with an overhanging tangle of bushes. Near its base the sparkling water gushes. A wing of supporting stonework on either side completes the cool little grotto, smelling so moist and mossy.

We had not been there long before two women came, carrying large graceful jars poised upon their heads ; and when they had filled their vessels and gone away, other women also came, and still others after them. A note of picturesque poverty entered into that procession of quiet figures, clothed so simply in limp draperies of deep hues, which time, and use, and the sunshine had mellowed into an infinite variety of soft tints.

Their dexterity as water-carriers had a crowning proof in the young woman who, besides balancing a large pitcher on her head, carried a baby in her arms. Thus she could not have put up a steadying hand, should the pitcher's equilibrium be imperilled—in which contingency her babe might well be overwhelmed with water,

did not worse befall. But that barefooted young woman had, it would seem, an absolute and legitimate faith in her capacity so discreetly to walk over the uneven ground as to maintain her head at a steady poise. And, as it happened, her powers of vision were below the average, for I noticed she had lost one eye.

The women of Reineh, by all we saw of them, won our respectful admiration. They did not dally to gossip at the well, they exchanged no loud-voiced pleasantries, nor did they stare at the strangers. Indeed, their bearing towards us equally avoided the opposite extremes of inquisitive curiosity and disdainful aloofness. On passing us they merely smiled a friendly, unobtrusive welcome. Thus it seemed to me that those humble Bedouins, looking so contented and composed, had not much to learn, in point of manners, from the best-bred ladies of Europe. I think they live too near Nazareth for the case to be otherwise.

We had glimpses of the village of mud houses, some fifty yards away, whence the women came. Also we saw several of the male inhabitants departing on horseback—quiet, dignified men, each with his brows encircled by the black horsehair coil that holds the head-cloths in position. It was the one notable feature of their toilet, which seemed otherwise an affair of nondescript rags.

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After lunch we resumed our journey, still going through beautiful, undulating country; and in a little while we came to the village that is thought to be Cana—a village nestling on the side of a sheltered hill, where pomegranates and wild olives grow among the fig-trees. Pointing westward to a rocky summit, Solomon said that was Jonah's birthplace.

As we rode slowly through Kefr Kenna, our route was lined by demure and smiling girls and boys, who sought to win our custom for the articles of needlework, clean, white, and dainty, they held up before us. The prices, proclaimed in musical chorus—for those children spoke in terms of currency to be understood by travellers—seemed reasonable enough; but my brother and I were of the wrong sex to desire specimens of those pretty goods, and so, blowing kisses to the little ones, we continued on our way.

Half an hour later we faced a far perspective of level ground. It proved a land of flowers. We passed across acres blue with bugloss. The young crops on cultivated land formed patches of vivid green. Great white birds flew over the plain in graceful, dazzling processions; and I was still watching those flights of storks when Solomon announced a discovery which I ought to have made. My horse was walking lame.

On examining the faulty foot, Mahomet satisfied himself there was nothing more amiss

with it than a farrier could readily put right. Meanwhile I perceived advantage to me in this misfortune to the poor brute. For in such a plight he could not repeat the mad behaviour which, on the Levantine shore, had done so



THE WELL OF CANA

much to unsettle my faith in horseflesh: and I directed Mahomet to untie the tow-rope.

Thus my period of bondage came to a close, and I resumed the independent status of one who rides his horse unaided—an experience, by the way, from which I had not been wholly cut off during recent days. For, every now

and then, that the spirit of liberty might not expire within my bosom, my brother had lent me his docile steed, and himself had a spell of captivity.

After we had resumed our journey, I felt that my tribulations in the saddle were surely over at last. For nothing could have been more reassuring than the prompt and good-tempered way in which my horse obeyed every suggestion of the bridle. But my equestrian ill-luck had not yet run its course.

Riding beside Solomon, I expressed an improved opinion of the animal provided for me.

"It good horse—very good horse," he replied. "But a pity he begin his journey on the flat country. He feel strong, he very fresh after his rest, so he not let you stop him gallop. But there are no more days when we travel on flat country—except for a little while, the same as now. All the rest is up a mountain, down a mountain—hard work for the horses. So they not want to gallop any more. Your horse never make any more trouble for you."

As he spoke, he gazed at my steed with a complacency that quickly gave place to consternation.

"At once stop, please!" he cried. "Your girth-strap quite loose, is it! I wonder you not fall off."

As a matter of fact, experience had shown



From our Camp at Lubieh.

Harold Copping.

me that my saddle was in the nature of a sliding seat, and, while making discreet experiments as to the best way of preserving an upright position, I had been secretly reproaching myself for not having previously noticed the instability of a rider's leather throne.

Whether Mahomet had been careless, or whether my horse had been saddled after a heavy meal, and had since lost circumference, I do not know. But when the anxious muleteer had tightened my straps I greatly appreciated the rigidity thereby imparted to the saddle. By the process of learning one thing and unlearning another, my education in horsemanship was slowly advancing.

It was hot but very pleasant on our eastward journey along that verdant plain, the eye delighting to roam over the northern range of hills, tinted by olive groves to a beautiful grey.

Five miles from Kefr Kenna, our day's journey ended in the early evening, when we arrived at our encampment. It stood on gentle undulations, with a village scarce discernible in the background.

An English village, with its church tower and two-storied houses, can be seen from afar. But a Syrian village is but a honeycomb of square chambers scarce six feet high, with roofs which, being flat and innocent of chimney pots, are invisible; so that a few mounds or bushes

may hide the whole of it. That we were just outside a village—Lubieh, its name—the eye had evidence only in the number of inhabitants who had come forth to see the travellers and their canvas dwellings.

The bearing of our visitors, who were for the most part in their teens, at once recommended them to our good opinion. They were not shy or sullen, nor did any element of hostility or derision enter into their behaviour. In a word, they smilingly accepted us for friends; and my brother, anxious to induce one of those picturesque youngsters to serve him for a model, warned Solomon on no account to send them away.

The young people of Lubieh obviously found us very interesting; but not for long did we monopolize their attention. One of their number arrived with a live stork in his arms—an incident which, since birds of that class flew in such numbers thereabouts, I at first took to be part of the everyday life of people who, living amid wild nature, would presumably have some dexterity in hunting and snaring.

That my surmise was mistaken, however, needed no further proof than the gratified air of the captor, and the eagerness with which his fellows gathered about him. There was a keen competition to fondle the bird, which, making no effort to escape, turned its head

from one to the other, as though fully conscious no harm was intended it. Solomon learnt that the boy had found the poor stork suffering from an injury that prevented flight. How this injury was contracted, no one know.

When the affair was beginning to lose its novelty, my brother got ready his sketching tools, and bade Solomon ask a certain handsome youth to sit for his portrait—a request promptly understood and cheerfully granted.

Truly we were again amongst a kind and enlightened people. Strange that in so small a country as Palestine we should already have happened upon human communities which, if indistinguishable in the matter of attire and domestic resources, differed in spirit as does



THE WOUNDED STORK

night from day. In giving my impressions of those who proved hostile and uncouth, I have not hesitated to use the words "barbarous" and "uncivilized," and, indeed, none others seem so applicable. But in describing the lads and lasses of Lubieh—their compassionate interest in the maimed bird, and their fraternal bearing towards ourselves—I find myself searching the vocabulary for epithets of the opposite significance. Those young people seemed not merely civilized, but cultured; to use that term in its loftiest application, as pointing to a state of the heart rather than of the mind. Nor was that impression weakened, if it certainly was not strengthened, by a dash of audacity in some of the youths—a characteristic leading to an incident that amused my brother and myself as much as it scandalized Solomon.

Taking things, however, in the order of their happening, I should first mention that, while the sketch was in progress, I set out to explore our undulating surroundings.

There were many flowers, the bright bugloss competing with glowing anemones in a shimmer of wild mustard. But something of a different character also engaged my attention. Here and there the fair vegetation was interrupted by rock surfaces, and at one place a large square had been cut out of the solid stone, though for what purpose I could not divine. Elsewhere I found

another of these artificial basins, and, examining this one more narrowly than the last, I noted that, since the edges were blunted by time, the cutting could not be of recent date. Nor, clearly, as accumulations of moss and grit attested, was it in present-day use. Pushing away an overhanging tangle of vegetation, I traced a connecting channel that communicated with another basin cut in the rock at a higher elevation.

Complicated by this new feature, the mystery was more tantalizing than ever; and I went back and fetched Solomon.

“Wine-presses,” he explained, on reaching the spot. “See now”—and he proceeded to demonstrate—“the grapes are put in this place, and when they are pressed the juice runs down to that place. Then it becomes wine.”

Two Lubieh youths had accompanied us, and I bade Solomon ask them if they had known, or heard, of wine being made in those alfresco vats. Recognizing that he knew much more about such matters than they could be expected to, the worthy dragoman was at first disposed to disregard this request, in which, however, I persisted, since, as I tried to make him understand, my desire was not so much to learn about wine-presses as to find out what those two lads knew about them.

Speech was accordingly exchanged in Arabic,

Solomon's share of the conversation being marked by a rising note of dissent.

"Bah!" he presently interpreted; "they very ignorant. They know nothing. They think"—and he shrugged his shoulders over the antiquarian fallacy—"people long ago use the hole in the rock to make oil. But oil-presses they are cut much deeper. It is wine-presses we see here."

Nor had I any reason to question his decision, though, as he himself remarked, the cultivation of the vine seemed to be wholly neglected, in that particular district, at the present time.

Sauntering back towards our camp, we saw yet a third basin cut in the solid stone, this one being half full of water from the recent rain; and I saw, floating in that pool, a little dead lizard with bright yellow spots on his upturned belly.

When my brother's sketch was done, we had our dinner, and it was during this meal, while the twilight was deepening without, that our ears were distressed by a lugubrious howling suggestive of no domestic quadruped with which we were acquainted. It was a hyena, Solomon presently informed us, and a hyena that was causing some local anxiety, since the brute had already killed one donkey, and was manifestly bent on further mischief. Nor did this exhaust the tidings with which a visit to the village had

charged our dragoman. It seemed that the population of the place had been that day depleted of thirty men, whom the Turkish authorities had marched off to assist in some desultory warfare proceeding in Arabia. The matter had the greater interest for us since there remained no adult villagers with the necessary military training to serve as our guard.

Solomon had, on his own admission, conducted an angry argument with the chief folk of Lubieh touching their responsibilities towards English travellers ; though, let me say here, I personally fail to see by what right he compelled the inhabitants at every place where we stopped, to provide us with protectors against themselves. However, on this, as on other occasions, the masterful dragoman gained his point ; and it appeared that, since mature soldiers were not available, he had consented to make do with two youths certified to be of a warlike and fearless spirit.

Nor was it long before one of our custodians, with a great clatter of accoutrements, strode into our tent. His appearance set us gaping. A handsome lad, who carried his head at a proud elevation, his raiment was distinguished by a wealth of colours and embroidery. But what arrested our gaze was the armoury of knives and pistols that formed a belt of terror around his slim body. The good people of

Lubieh had apparently been concerned that what he lacked in years should be made good by the number of his weapons. Supposing his colleague to be armed with anything like the same prodigality, I could only conclude that, awed by Solomon's stern admonitions, those conscientious Syrians had brought together, on our behalf, every implement of slaughter their village possessed. Woe betide the poor hyena, I could not help reflecting, should he visit our tents in the night.

Lowering his carbine to the ground, our visitor drew attention first to the largest of his many curved knives, and then to the belt of cartridges that encircled his chest. And the next minute, placing his right hand on the butt of an enormous pistol, he sternly demanded, "Baksheesh! Baksheesh!"

Since arriving in Palestine we had been subjected to many applications for a gratuity; but this was the first time supplication had been supported by firearms. The picturesque youth, in thus turning his weapons against us, was certainly acting outside his duty as our protector. Solomon was grievously displeased, and soon he was giving us an English summary of the torrent of Arabic denunciation he poured against the offender.

"I ask him," he indignantly explained, "if he call that respectable. I tell him to be ashamed.

And he the son of the headman! Bah! the foolish fellow—he think himself a king.”

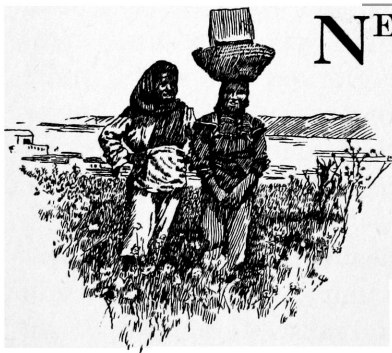
My brother and I, for our part, instructed Solomon to tell him he was a naughty boy. Then, observing how abashed he had grown in the face of so much censure, we so far relented as to present him with half an ounce of tobacco. Gladly clutching his prize, our guardian departed to the post of duty.

Ere we went to sleep, the note of the hyena was supplemented by the plaintive wailing of jackals. Another new experience was that mosquitoes buzzed about our pavilion, so that now we were grateful for the muslin screens that hung over our beds.

CHAPTER IX

Tiberias

The Sea of Galilee : a superb view—Horns of Hattin—The “Five Loaves”—Walking waist-deep in flowers—Tiberias and its inhabitants—The market-place—Finding a farrier—Our camp on the shore—Visit to Hamman—Experiences in the steaming darkness—Tidings of a tragedy—The dead girl.



NEXT day we were early in the saddle, and in the hot sunshine we traversed more hills of Galilee, watching the many storks fly over a country gloriously green. And soon

we attained a summit that gave us a vista never to be forgotten.

We looked down upon the far sweep of a fertile valley mapped into tiny squares of brown and green—areas of ploughed land and growing crops. But for long we had eyes only for that

to which the valley led—the smooth, quiet face of a lake, grey and purple with the reflection of the mountains rising from its farther shore, mountains in front of other mountains that merged with the sky in a lilac haze. It was the Sea of Galilee.

That vast, varied, sun-lit landscape, so full of gentle majesty, affected me like nothing I had ever seen before—like nothing I shall ever see again. For human experience admits no other opportunity for so exquisite a harmony of earthly beauty and divine associations. As I looked upon the Sea of Galilee, a sense of supreme privilege came over me, and my heart sang with gratitude. But my mind was consciously overwhelmed. In those glorious moments, more was offered to the imagination than the imagination could grasp. So I found myself making a deliberate effort to print upon my memory the physical facts of valley, water, and mountains, with their grades of beautiful colouring, so that I should have opportunity, with the beautiful picture in my mind, to realize its significance in quiet hours to come.

I can but catalogue some details of that thrilling geography as pointed out by Solomon. The eminence just left behind us, with its group of little trees showing against the sky, was the Horns of Hattin—one of the two sites associated by tradition with the Sermon on the Mount.

On turning our heads we saw the other—a hill beyond the valley and sloping towards the lake, a hill with its vegetation interrupted here and there with patches of exposed brown rocks. One of two white specks upon the north-west shore was a ruin that marked the site of Capernaum. That rising ground across the water was the Gergesene cliffs. The spot on which we stood, with its group of boulders, was identified by Empress Helena as the place where five thousand were miraculously fed, and—though stronger probability belongs to a site across the lake—the Arabs name those stones the “Five Loaves.” Active little lizards were sunning themselves upon the largest of the group. The ground thereabout was brilliant with anemones, cistus, cornflowers, and marguerites. But those flowers were but the promise of what was to come, like the first few flakes of the snow-storm.

Once more moving, we went by a winding path downward towards the lake; and our way was through a paradise. To the right and left of our serpentine course, so far as the eye could roam over that sunny mountain side, it was flowers, flowers, and still flowers; growing as high as a crop of barley; animate with butterflies and bees; rich blue spikes of lupin waving above the shimmering rainbow-haze of petals; the air full of soft, delicious perfume.



Traditional site of the Miracle
of the Loaves and Fishes.

Harold Copping.

Giving my horse to the muleteer, I waded out into that sea of flowers, so that their shining brightness was a strain to my eyes and I was splashed to the knees with pollen.

On a sudden, at a bend in the path, that region of hallowed history disclosed a new wonder to our eyes. Down below, upon the margin of the sea, was a little city shining white—tiny domes and minarets and houses, as if exquisitely cut in ivory. This was Tiberias, whitened because of the sun, and because of Jewish rites. To sharpen and beautify the contrast, the Sea of Galilee, viewed from this lower level, was a background of rich marine blue.

On nearing the city, we saw the grey ruins of a castle with its embracing wall ; and presently we met some few of the inhabitants going about their pastoral affairs—a drowsy youth driving a large flock of black goats ; a Moslem leading a string of camels ; three patriarch Jews, one riding an ass, two going slowly on foot. Many men were squatting in the roadway outside the city's crumbling stone entrance.

We passed through the uneven, narrow, unwashed streets of Tiberias, with barefooted children in picturesque rags following at our heels. Peeping inside some of the little white houses, we saw bright-apparelled women asquat on the stone floors, preparing food. Yellow and white dogs met us with unfriendly growling.

The market-place, rudely roofed with boards against the sunlight, was peopled mainly by girls of dark-eyed beauty, and venerable Jews with curly locks and beards, jet black or gone grey. Oranges, spices, lentils, harness, cord, bread, prunes, tobacco—these were conspicuous among the wares. Also we saw an area of pavement where the thick, round fish of Galilee were exposed for sale.

Having passed through the city, we found upon its outskirts a farrier at work beside his al fresco forge; and our thoughtful dragoman took the opportunity to have my horse attended to. For the poor brute's limp, if not very pronounced, still continued.

Having surrendered my steed to the smith, I experienced the agreeable change, when we resumed our journey, of accompanying my companions on foot. We proceeded along a road that ran beside the lake, that beautiful expanse of still water lying on our left, while the open country rose to verdant uplands on our right. Nor had we gone quite a mile before we found our tents standing ready to receive us upon the shore.

Nowhere in the world, I think, could a more delightful and interesting camping ground be chosen. Our surroundings invited us to rest, and meditate, and be happy. My brother and I brought out our stools and sat awhile in silence, looking out upon the lovely lake. Little splashes

of leaping fish were the only sounds. And anon we sauntered along the broad beach of large pebbles, which were white and grey. We picked up dainty shells. There was a clean smell of water in the evening air.

Many miles of the Sea of Galilee lay before us, stretching far to right and left, but no sail was in sight. The only visible craft were a few row-boats anchored off Tiberias. Looking in the opposite direction, we saw, about a mile away, a lonely domed building, small and yellow, as a conspicuous landmark on the shore. Solomon told us it was Hamman—hot baths of great antiquity, and still in use. Eager for a luxury, and nothing loath for an adventure, we said we should like to go there; and our resourceful dragoman undertook to make the necessary arrangements.

Thus it came about that, an hour after dinner, my brother and I, accompanied by a local guide, set out on foot for Hamman. The night lacked a moon, but our companion carried a lamp, which proved almost as useful in the building as upon the uneven road.

From a small courtyard, which was given over to dogs and untidiness, we groped along a narrow passage that led to a chamber warm, wet, and mysterious. Between pillars we saw the yellow flicker of a single candle, revealing clouds of vapour. Our guide's stronger light

showed us to be walking on a stone pathway that glistened with moisture; and from its curving course we perceived that we trod a circle. The stone pillars, occurring at regular intervals, bordered the inner circumference.

Within that circle of pathway and pillars, the rays of our lamp melted in the rising steam, leaving our knowledge of that interior still incomplete.

Meanwhile, if sight asked for more, other senses suffered repletion. A perspiring languor had come over me. I wanted air. A promise of dizziness affected my temples. Indeed, if this bath had won the approbation of Pliny and Josephus (and we had Solomon's word for that), my preference would be, I felt, for something less suffocating.

On the outer circumference of our path, the wall rose only to a height of some thirty inches, when the perpendicular became nearly horizontal to a recessed depth of about six feet, the continued wall being a back to the lounge (covered with grass matting) thus formed. Obeying the gesticulated directions of our conductor, we there reclined at sleepy ease until, in a little while, our bodies felt more attuned to their surroundings. Not yet, however, could our eyes gain a full view of a chamber which seemed so strangely to combine the attributes of a wash-house and a tomb.

A sudden splash commanding attention, we slid off our stone couch and went cautiously to the spot whence came the sound. Here, seated beside a pillar, we found the brown ghost of a naked Bedouin with upturned, grinning face. He soon discovered, as our conductor had done, that it was unavailing to address the two Englishmen in Arabic; but by signs and exclamations he made us understand that his feet reached the water where he sat, and that, while the bath had a shallow margin for a couple of feet or so, this led by a precipitous step to a depth that could drown a man.

The voices brought to life another brown figure beside another pillar; and, for our encouragement, the two native bathers stood waist-deep in the water and made a great splashing. Then one, in the merriment of his heart, fell a-singing, and out of the steam there came a single syllable weirdly sustained, with faint gradations of note, for an astonishing period—that representing, at any rate, the impression Arabic singing makes, at a first acquaintance, on a western ear.

Stooping, I put my hand in the water. It was hot—so hot, in fact, that I could not help feeling, if I entered that water to bathe, I might peradventure stay there to be boiled.

But knowledge only cometh by experience; so I removed my garments and dipped an ex-

perimental foot in the steaming fluid. Having plucked up resolution to give it the company of its fellow, there I sat humbly on the stonework, waiting courage for further immersion.

Confidence came by degrees, and anon the two English bathers stood upright on the margin of least depth, fetching their breath how they could in the clouds of steam. Then my brother, plunging headlong, swam across the bath; and, since he returned none the worse (but, indeed, much uplifted in spirit), I found heart to copy his behaviour. So that presently the pair of us were swimming in full enjoyment to and fro across that small area, drawing ejaculations of enthusiasm from the Bedouin bathers, who, it would seem, could not put their arms and legs to such service.

That water, hot from the inside of the earth, had a soft and silky feel, though unpleasantly sulphurous to the taste and smell. From our new point of view we could discern the dome of the building above our heads.

In subsequent soapings and sluicings by an attendant, experiences in a Turkish bath had their counterpart. A notable shortcoming of the establishment then revealed itself. It had no dressing-room. An apartment of a lower temperature was manifestly essential if the burden of clothes were to be resumed in any comfort, and if one were to confront the cool

night air with confidence and closed pores. We had perforce to take the risk; nor, walking briskly back to our tents, did we contract the chills we courted.

Next morning, when we arose, the sun was sparkling on the Sea of Galilee. But a heaviness rested on our camp, and we saw our servants conferring together with sad faces. A piteous tragedy had just happened at Tiberias, as we learnt from Solomon, who had the facts from early wayfarers along the road.

Affliction had fallen on Rabbi Abraham, a rich man who owned many houses. But chief among his possessions was Maryetta his daughter, who was sixteen years old and very beautiful. Strangers, when they saw her in the doorway, ever asked who that lovely girl might be, and were told she was the comeliest maid in all Tiberias.

At four o'clock that morning Rabbi Abraham had risen, as his custom was, and gone forth to the synagogue, that he might perform his prayers before the rising of the sun. Returning, he heard cries and lamentations from afar; and as, walking swiftly, he drew nigh his home, behold! the roof and walls were fallen. And in the cloud of dust many neighbours were gathered together, uttering a loud wailing and wringing their hands.

Out of the ruins they drew the wife of Rabbi

Abraham, sorely injured but still alive. Digging deeper, they found the body of Maryetta, who, unhurt by falling stones and timber, had died of suffocation. And when Rabbi Abraham saw that his daughter was dead (I relate the facts much as they were told me, through Arabic



RUINS OF THE FALLEN HOUSE, TIBERIAS

into English), he rent his garments, and was afflicted with great sorrow, saying: "I would pay as much as had been her weight in gold rather than this thing should have befallen me. I would that all my other children were taken from me if only this one were spared." For

Maryetta had been his chief joy, and he had spent much money to buy her beautiful clothes.

Passing through Tiberias during the day, we came upon the scene of sadness—a great heap of dust and timber, where excavators toiled with their picks. Already the body of Maryetta had been laid in the tomb; and that night, as I sat outside our tents, writing the sad story in my diary, a muleteer rode in with the news that Rabbi Abraham's wife was dead.

CHAPTER X

On the Sea of Galilee

Our voyage on the lake—Snow-clad Hermon—Shelter in a vault—Sounds from the shore—Bathing in two temperatures—"The Place of the Big Fishes"—A naked fisherman: his ingenious methods—Dense shoals of fish—Explorations ashore—The hospitable fishermen—Minstrelsy afloat—Wrecked in a squall—A ride to the Jordan—The river entrance—Companionship without words—Good-bye to Galilee—Scorpions, adders, and tarantulas.

EARLY on the morrow we started for a cruise upon the Sea of Galilee. It was a grey morning, and Mount Hermon was not visible. Since we left Acre, that landmark of Israel had figured daily as a shape of opal prettiness in the sky on our northward horizon. Sometimes we had seen the far sweep of the mountains of Lebanon, but it was always Hermon that stood highest in the heavens.

Over night, distances had been sharply defined in clear hues, and when we were deep in twilight, still the sun had shone on snow-capped Hermon. This morning the scenery was charged with moisture and menace. None but the near mountains could be seen.



The Lake of Galilee.

Harold Copping.

For a while the lake was like a sheet of polished slate. Then suddenly its surface was pitted and a-splash with a hissing torrent of large rain-drops; and our five sailors, leaving their great oars hanging, wriggled into oilskins. Though we donned garments almost as impervious, no covering could avail against that violent downpour, and we readily consented to shape an immediate course towards shore and shelter.

Being but a few furlongs out from Tiberias, we found asylum in an architectural relic of that city's former self—one of the several vaults of substantial masonry which, with a depth of water ample for our craft, gave sufficient head-room for ourselves. In that dark cavern of man's making we tarried until the rain ceased, the heavens opened blue and sunbeams sparkled on the sea.

Emerging from our shelter, we found that this arched remnant of an ancient building formed one boundary of a little secluded cove, where girls and women of Tiberias stood ankle-deep in the water washing clothes.

We continued our voyage northward, leaving the city behind, and distantly skirting a shore of gentle undulations that rose in the background to be mountains. Across the water came the soft voice of an unseen shepherd-boy singing among the leafy hills; and also we heard the

lazy tinkling of the wether-bells. Later I espied a distant string of camels, tiny as spiders, cross the crest of a hill, making towards Tiberias. Then for a mile or so, moving on the smooth water, we were alone with the scenery and the birds. From side to side, from end to end, no vessel was in sight ; for a bend in the shore had hidden Tiberias, with its half-dozen row-boats anchored in the little bay. The Sea of Galilee was a lovely solitude.

My brother and I bathed, experiencing two sorts of water—one luxuriously warm, the other numbingly cold. We were but thirty yards from the shore, where a hot stream came tumbling over dark stones into the sea. So considerable was the volume of this tributary that its waters spread far. We swam into patches of warmth, and the water between and underneath felt, by contrast, icy.

Our sailors offered to take us to “the place of the big fishes,” and, one destination serving like another where interest was universal, to this we assented. In a little time they ceased from rowing, and, hushing us to silence, caused our eyes to obey their pointing fingers. Sure enough, ten yards away, the water broke with noisy splashings, and we saw the curved backs and protruding fins of vigorous fish. After watching these creatures appear and disappear in the ringed and restless water we looked towards

the shore and saw a naked fisherman. Girt only with a loin-cloth, he stood knee-deep in the water—a fine figure of a young man in burnished bronze.

From his right hand, held high, hung a rope of net in heavy folds. Cautiously, furtively, the



"AND THERE HE STOOD, STILL AS A STATUE"

fisherman crept farther from the shore until immersed to the waist; and there he stood, still as a statue, though I noticed his eyes intently scanning the water. Suddenly the bronze image quickened into active life. He swung his net thrice round his head, so that, from being a cluster of coils, it expanded into a large meshed disc, which, on being released from his hold, flew lightly on to the water a yard or so away. The net sank rapidly from its margin (manifestly encircled with weights), the centre being last to disappear.

Swimming forward, the fisherman plunged, so that for a brief space we saw two brown legs slanting out of the water; then only two brown feet; and finally the man had vanished as completely as his gear.

For several seconds our eyes knew nothing of him. When we saw him again his left hand clutched at his net, whereof the weighted margin, being drawn together, formed the neck of a bag; and, thrusting in his right hand, he drew forth a wriggling fish. This he straightway flung to the shore, where we saw it vigorously flopping on the pebbles, until a man, stepping from among the rocks, removed the captive to a situation of greater security. Then the fisherman, shifting his hold of the net, shook out its coils and repeated his cunning manœuvres, this time catching two fish.

We bade our sailors row us ashore ; and when they had done so, the young fisherman, ceasing from his labours, came forward to welcome us with a smile so human and engaging that I made bold to take his photograph. Then we looked about us at the snug quarters of these primitive fisher-folk. A hollow in the rock gave shelter against wind and rain, and in that long shallow cave half a dozen men were squatting. Two, using their hands as spoons, were dining from a pot of steaming lentils. Several nets were spread to dry upon the bushes.

I climbed a steep path leading to a ledge of rock that overhung the shore. Thence one looked down upon the transparent water, which gleamed and shimmered with silver flashes and little grey shapes. The mind took some moments to realize that these were fish. Here, there, near and far, in deep water and in shallow, occurred the crowded swarm of gliding, darting forms. Truly the Sea of Galilee is densely populated with bream and barbel and other fish.

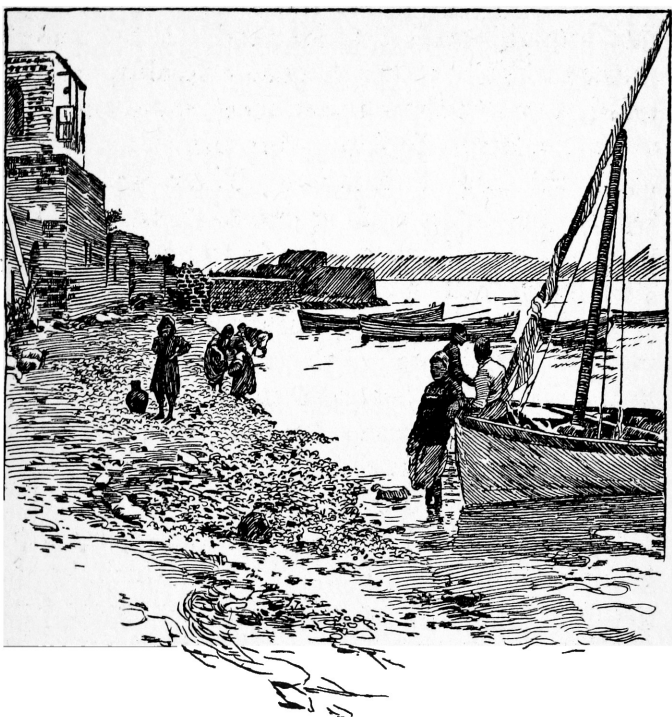
I turned from the green and glittering water to ramble in the flowery wilderness—to tread the lovely tangle of bugloss and cyclamen and iris. Five minutes brought me to a little valley, with fig-trees obtruding above the jungle of varied vegetation ; and, penetrating into the shade, I came upon a large bath or cistern of venerable masonry—moss-grown fragment of a forgotten

city. It held a foot or so of clear, warm water, which flowed in from an unseen spring and overflowed down a little ferny ravine that looked like a home of the fairies.

The Galilee fishermen, seeing luncheon preparations on foot, bestirred themselves to contribute supplementary viands—some half-dozen of their new-caught fish toasted in the flames of a wood fire, so that the skin was blackened and cracked, revealing white, firm flesh ; and some young peeled stalks of a thistle which, Solomon explained, was much used by the Arabs as food. With honest zeal we ate the burnt flesh and that strange salad.

Anon returning to our boat, we departed from the pleasant company of those fisher-folk ; nor had we gone far before a breeze sprang up to fret the surface of the sea. So the sailors set aside their oars and unfurled our big white sail, which quickly took us again into view of the domes and palm-trees of Tiberias.

From one of the anchored row-boats, we were hailed by a youth who, having recently bathed, was replacing his flowing draperies. Gliding within his range, we suffered him to come aboard our vessel ; and the next minute he had broken into song. Heavily pitted by small-pox was the face of this young Arab, but his dark eyes shone with engaging merriment and self-esteem. His minstrelsy (much in request, we were told, at



THE SEA OF GALILEE AT TIBERIAS

Tiberias weddings) was certainly the finest vocal performance I had heard in the East. It was explained to us that he sang love ballads of the country ; and certainly here was Arabic music which, besides pleasing at the moment by its soft quality, left some phrases of subtle melody to haunt the memory.

Meanwhile the breeze strengthened to a considerable wind, so that we flew with our great

canvas wing, the vessel borne over at an angle that brought her bulwarks nearly to the water's surface. With so much pace available, we decided to run to the southernmost shore and look upon the River Jordan. But the riot of speed had a thrilling termination. There was a loud report, the little craft quivered from stern to bow, and we all had much ado to keep our seats. The boom had snapped, and about the mast there hung a flapping disarray of ropes and canvas. With some of the wrecked sail dragging in the water, the boat was in temporary peril of capsizing. But strong hands quickly gathered in the disabled canvas. Then the oars were got out, and we rowed to our tents.

That afternoon my brother, accompanied by Solomon, went to sketch the site which, by the greater weight of probability, is associated with the Sermon on the Mount ; while I, accompanied by Mahomet, set off in the opposite direction, to try and reach the mouth of the Jordan. The distance being considerable, we went on horseback ; and it was a satisfaction to find myself upon an animal that now walked in complete comfort on four sound feet.

I called a brief halt at Hamman, to examine its environment by daylight. We heard the water gurgling within the closed-in remnant of a former bath, and chinks in the ancient masonry gave out evil smells from the pent-up sulphur

fumes. Several springs gushed forth upon the shore, a copious supply of hot water being thus available to all who might desire to use it.

At one of the steaming pools, two industrious Arab women were washing bright-coloured clothes; and water at a temperature of 144 degrees Fahrenheit must be excellent for the purpose. I have since learnt that, since 1350 B.C., those hot springs have been credited with a great efficacy in rheumatic complaints; but neither my brother nor I had been qualified to subject their reputation to a personal test.

For a mile or so we journeyed comfortably along a well-defined track that ran beside the pleasant shore. But either that track ceased, or we lost it. Still keeping in touch with the lake, we doggedly pushed our way up mounds and down declivities, through a universal growth of tall grass and mustard—an impediment that presently distressed our horses, so that they needed some stimulus to persistent effort. But at last, having forged our way through the luxuriant wilderness, we came to where the waters of that fresh-water sea issue as the River Jordan.

The scene proved simple, quiet, and—one might almost say—English. At the narrow entrance, the current ran swift and gurgling. Rushes grew beside the grassy banks. There was a croaking of frogs. In the clear shallows

young fishes darted away in affright at footsteps. I saw sparrows, and little singing birds, and one crested lark. A kingfisher flew by, poised over the river, then dived swiftly, to reappear with a small silver captive in his unerring beak.

Several row-boats were moored against the bank—trim and graceful as dinghies of the Upper Thames. Two small tents, conspicuous among the bushes, showed that other travellers were there before us. A near bend carried the Jordan out of sight, but a perspective of green mountains marked its course. On the shore of the lake, away beyond the river's mouth, I saw Semaleh—square houses and a mosque shining in the sunlight. Near where we were standing the mustard and the marguerites grew to an unusual height.

Turning our faces towards Hermon, Mahomet and I rode back to the camp; we having contrived to spend a most sociable afternoon together, despite our inability to exchange one word of human speech. And, indeed, given a feeling of good fellowship, smiles and signs are sufficiently eloquent for all ordinary purposes.

As my brother and I were fain to agree, the next day brought us to the time when we must resume our travels. The Sea of Galilee, in our personal experiences, had been loveliness without alloy. That nature had put bitter drops in her cup of sweetness, I did not realize until

the hour of our going away. Then I heard of scorpions, adders, and tarantulas lurking among the flowers ; which somewhat softened the sadness of departure. My informant was a German resident with a taste for natural history, and he showed me his camphored specimens of the poisonous creatures he named. But, it seems, they scarce assert their presence during the verdant spring. Not till later, when fierce sunshine beats upon the scorched hillsides, do those venomous insects and reptiles mature and multiply.

CHAPTER XI

Amid Hostile Tribes

Water tortoises—A sullen reception at Kefr Sabt—Photography leads to friendship—An ancient Khan—Suspected loiterers—Solomon and the tadpoles—A little African settlement—Mahomet and the piccaninnies—Mount Tabor—Endor and its unfriendly people—Simon and George prepare a surprise—Banquets in the wilderness—Feverish diplomacy: Solomon on the sick list—Our visit to the cave—Curious optical development—Sketching under difficulties—We are suspected of witchcraft.

THE mountain climb from Tiberias was a long strain on our horses' strength; so half way to the summit we lingered awhile at a well where two young women, come there to fill their water jars, sat gossiping on the stonework in the sunshine. Having fallen into an easy chat with one of these, Solomon revealed her as bewailing the departure of her lover that morning for the war, which loss filled her with the intention to return home presently and have a good cry. But English eyes saw small confirmation of the Arabic speech, for the woman was smoking a cigarette and smiling.

From the top of the mountain, having looked our last at the Sea of Galilee, we descended



Mountain side overlooking the Lake of Galilee.

Harold Copping.

into a winding valley, hot and moist and green, where we came upon a small pond that provided an unfamiliar interest to our view. Near the shore a stone protruded darkly above the water, and even as my glance chanced to be upon it, the top of that stone fell off with a noisy splash.

Gazing now with greater curiosity at another exposed stone, we saw it to be capped strangely with a shape that thrust forth a neck, alertly poised ; and imagination saw two eyes like pink beads, and filled with fear. Water tortoises, discerning reader, and a numerous colony thereof. At our near approach we saw them scuttling into deep water, muddying the shallows with cloudy trails.

Kefr Sabt was our next experience—a hot, dusty village of mud houses and hostile Algerian settlers. A company of men squatting within the shadow of a wall met us with dull, frigid looks. There had not been less of friendship and welcome in a shower of arrows. As the Christian dogs were seen approaching, the women had slunk away to their burrows, while the children went and hid in the maze of rude walls and houses.

We comported ourselves amiably, all unresponsive to this timid, sulky enmity ; for, however little these people might favour our presence, we had occasion to tarry awhile in

the village, that my brother might secure some record of its primitive architecture. Solomon and Mahomet, in a manner deliberately ungentle (for hostile fanaticism needs, in their opinion, to be cowed), mentioned our purpose to the squatting Arabs, who stared and listened in silence, refusing to be interested.

Yet stolid ignorance was not proof against the promptings of curiosity. That I also might carry away a memento of the place, I shot out the lanky, telescoped legs of my tripod, and made ready to take a photograph. All those eyes by the wall were soon bent upon a proceeding so foreign to the familiar happenings of Arab existence, and, ere I had adjusted my focus, a tall, thin man rose and loitered towards me—a man whom I had already noted for a certain hint of humour that distinguished his brown face from those of his fellows. As he drew near I turned, and, by way of assurance that I was more of man than monster, directed full at him a smile of frankness and fraternity. At his responsive grin the barriers were removed that divide two races and religions, and the essential brotherhood of humanity was vindicated.

By pantomime we found our way to relations of cordiality and comprehension, and I made myself understood as desiring that some children should come forth as subjects for my camera.



KEFR SABT

Gathering his decayed robes more tightly about him, he took long strides to a neighbouring mound, whence he beckoned and shouted towards a region where I saw little faces, grave and unyouthful, bob up and down behind a substantial barricade of mud and stones.

These poor mirthless children, tutored to a fear and hatred of the Christians, would not come to be photographed. But now that one of the untidy, bare-legged Arabs had risen to the nobility of brotherhood, his companions, inspired by healthy example, gathered also about the photographer, forgetting their disdain of him in the wonder excited by his little black box of mysterious mechanism. Yet when the time came for us to mount our horses and be gone, we had no farewell salutations, and our departure was, I cannot doubt, a weight off the minds of the little ones.

On we journeyed till the hour for lunch found us at a broad track which, since the days of Saul of Tarsus, has been used by caravans passing between Jerusalem and Damascus. Here were the ruins of a spacious khan built centuries ago to afford shelter and refreshment to the travelling merchants. Kestrels were moving, in strong curves of flight, about the old, iron-grey walls; and we saw them enter black chasms in the crumbling masonry where they had their nests.

It had been a morning of brilliant, hot sunshine, so that, though we wore pith helmets and had given our waistcoats to Mahomet, both of us had drooped in the saddle, half-baked and perspiring. For my part, having dispatched an ample meal (and let the climate of Palestine here be commended for its hunger-producing quality), I lay down and slept, omitting to dream that we were beset by robbers. Physical unease, had that peradventure been my portion, would by a natural sequence have put that ill fancy in my brain; for, ere I closed my eyes, Solomon—having exchanged earnest talk on the point with Mahomet—apprised us that the place had an ugly name for harbouring certain small-souled thieves, who preyed on unprotected travellers.

On awakening from my nap (and there was evidence on my brother's easel that it had been



The Caravan route between Jerusalem and Damascus.

Harold Copping.

of some duration), I was reminded of this matter on seeing Solomon and Mahomet—who themselves were wont to slumber after the midday meal—still sitting together how last I had seen them, wakeful and whispering, and now with their eyes bent suspiciously on three dark-visaged, ragged Bedouins loitering some few hundred yards away. But if there was mischief in the strangers' minds (and for my part, in the absence of evidence, I preferred to think otherwise) there was a wholesome discretion in their hearts; for, trying none of their tricks upon us, they presently took themselves off.

Solomon thereupon arose, and, filling a cup at the brook, took a draught to the confusion of horse-thieves and all miscreants. But this, in the estimation of my brother, was to court a more formidable peril than the unkempt wanderers had presented; for the brook, coursing sluggishly across the track of travellers, was none too sparkling, besides containing tadpoles.

Smiling in full confidence that he acted discreetly, Solomon filled and drained the cup anew, and then—not for the first time—unfolded his philosophy on the anxious drink question. We were right in our Spartan resolve, he conceded, that no Palestine water should pass our lips before it had been boiled. But for him and Mahomet the precaution was needless. Their native blood was armed against the subtle

germs that might set up fever in our foreign blood.

Whether Solomon was fully justified in those conclusions is a point on which a later occurrence will be seen to throw some doubt. Meanwhile we continued our way through that interesting scenery, the afternoon yielding us a delightful little surprise. For we came upon a bit of Africa—a family of negroes with their picturesque cluster of tents built of reeds. Even Solomon seemed to have no very definite idea how those people came to be there. Knowing he had a range of languages equal to most emergencies, I asked him to interview the big-lipped woman who was regarding us with so frank and friendly a smile.

Of the sustained and animated conversation that took place between them, he afterwards supplied this summary:

“I ask her if she not go back to her country. She says she waiting to die, because her husband die here.” And since the black face shone with health and contentment, I took this to mean that the good soul wished to end her days at that place, to which her heart was linked by associations of tender sadness. That life still held for her some palpable attractions was suggested by the sight of several juvenile blacks who came to gaze at the two white-faced strangers sitting on horses. But I cannot doubt



THE RUINED KHAN

that those little ones, when they afterwards compared impressions of their visitors, must have classed my brother and myself far below one whose complexion was a compromise between their colour and ours. In truth, while Solomon contented himself with talking, and the two Englishmen did nothing but look on, Mahomet rose to a truer sense of his opportunities.

Human nature is superior to mere differences of race and climate, and a curly-haired piccanniny has no less a zest for "goodies" than the Eton boy whose father wears a coronet. Mahomet had come unprovided with sweetmeats, but he bethought him of the cakes of unleavened bread left over from lunch. The contents of the bag soon changed hands, and thus the sum of gladness in the world was augmented. For those sable urchins devoured the toothsome windfall with grinning gusto; their mother's eye sparkled to see her little ones so favoured; while the beaming muleteer was manifestly happy in giving happiness to others. All of which goes to show that, let a man look never so like a blear-eyed brigand on a first acquaintance, he may prove, when you get to know him, a thoroughly good-hearted fellow.

Journeying through groves and across rocky places, we came into view of Mount Tabor, with the appearance of which we were destined to become familiar. For we saw it in several aspects during the remainder of our winding course among the hills; and when we reached our camp, there right ahead of us rose that majestic green mountain, with the open vista of the huge Plain of Esdraelon on the left of the picture.

To see a cave that tradition associates with the witch of Endor, we had come to the village

of that name ; Solomon warning us beforehand that we need expect no welcome from the natives. We found a group of them, mostly children, regarding our tents from a discreet distance and solemnly whispering together. To give every opportunity for a friendly understanding, my brother and I presently advanced smilingly in their direction, and even beckoned to them to come closer ; but these overtures proved unavailing. At our approach, the elders slunk off and the children ran away. For ignorance begets hatred and hatred begets fear. Endor must rank in the same dismal category with Shefr-Amr and Kafr Sabt ; and once more we were to marvel over the diverse mental conditions of the people of Palestine. I began to think of that little country as a spiritual patchwork of darkness and light.

But our attention was soon engaged by a matter of purely domestic interest. Simon the cook, asquat beside his pans and charcoal fire, looked more than usually animated ; and when presently he was joined by George the waiter, I noticed the pair of them chuckling over something while they stole sly glances in our direction. My curiosity aroused, I asked Solomon if he happened to know what conspiracy our two retainers were hatching. Then it was his turn to look merry and knowing.

"For you they make a great surprise," he

confidentially explained. "Always you have chickens for dinner, every day the same. So you get very tired of chickens. But this afternoon the cook find a man who sell him some pigeons. They quite sure you both be very pleased when you look in the dish, and find it is not chicken this time."

Now he mentioned it, I did recall that, in the elaborate dinners Simon continued to cook, and George to serve, the same species of bird figured from day to day in the poultry course. But the flesh of fowl had certainly not grown irksome to me by repetition, nor in that connection had I heard one word of criticism from my brother. However, if the appeal to the palate stirred us to no great enthusiasm, we found Solomon's disclosure delightful enough on personal grounds.

That Simon and George should avail themselves of an opportunity to vary our menu was merely a proof of conscientious service. But that, having done so, they should hug the knowledge to their bosoms, and rejoice together over the thought of our impending pleasure, revealed a state of simple-hearted enthusiasm to which, in the Western world, one is not accustomed in those temporarily engaged for domestic service.

When at dinner we reached the innovation, my brother and I did not fail to demonstrate our approval. And, indeed, those pigeons were



TWO OF OUR GUARDS

excellent, as was every other feature of the banquet. Perhaps I should rather say that we were, as usual, in an appreciative key. The leisurely dinner of many courses is an institution with which, speaking generally, I find myself out of sympathy. Before the function is well started I am apt to wish that the waiter would bring me a plate of meat, a piece of bread, and some vegetables, and have done with it. But after a long day of interesting travel in the hot Palestine sunshine, when you are restfully seated under

canvas with your face fanned by the cool evening air, I think no method of taking nourishment would seem too deliberate.

At Endor the stage of coffee and complacency had been reached when the abrupt entrance of Solomon served to remind us that, however contented we might be, other people had their little troubles. It was easy to see that something had upset our excellent dragoman.

"What you think?" he burst forth; and, speaking under stress of emotion, he took us into his confidence. It was the old trouble, but in an aggravated form. The people of Endor had refused, bluntly and with some venom, to provide us with a guard, their inclination apparently lying rather in the direction of plundering than of protecting us.

"They not like you," Solomon went on, "because they know you are English. So I tell them you not English—you Germans."

"What!" exclaimed my brother and I.

"I tell them," continued Solomon, as he wearily passed a hand across his brow, "that you great friends of the German Emperor, and if somebody come and rob you, the people of Endor be very sorry afterwards, because it make the German Emperor angry against them."

"But, I say, Solomon," protested my astounded brother, "we can't allow that sort of thing, you know." It certainly was most

humiliating to have had that falsehood told on our behalf—a falsehood, by the way, which was not only unpatriotic but foolish, since a Union Jack fluttered from each of our tents.

“No matter is that,” was Solomon’s comment when we mentioned the flags. “I make them afraid, and after some more talk they send two men to be soldiers for us. Ah!” he added, again stroking his forehead, “to-night I have headache.” Whereupon my brother, having examined him narrowly and felt his pulse, arrived at a conclusion which tended to explain and excuse Solomon’s deplorable diplomacy. He was somewhat feverish; so, having admonished him to be more careful in future what water he drank, we administered quinine and ordered him to bed.

Nor was there any reason to doubt the soundness of our treatment; for, following a night that was attended by no untoward incident, we awoke next morning to find Solomon fully restored to health.

After breakfast we set off to visit the cave, and soon found that, whatever our nationality was presumed to be, we were still out of public favour. But the sour looks of those Endor folk were quickly forgotten in the interest excited by their cave—a spacious and shapeless cavity in the crust of the earth; a rock-chamber of nature’s making. Having walked down the sloping

pathway into the interior gloom, we looked back at the huge, irregular entrance hole whence came light and air. There was ample head room. We trod the dust of ages worn from the protruding rocks.

Penetrating to the end of the pathway, I confronted the dim shimmer of water; but how far the pool extended, and what lay beyond, the darkness prevented me from seeing. Meanwhile my brother, his fancy taken by the patch of blue sky framed by the rugged entrance, sat on a boulder to sketch that effect; and when, a minute later, I turned from watching his preparations to look again into the depths of the cave, behold a transformation! I could clearly discern a wall of rock that lay beyond the sheet of water. For my eyes, attuned to the gloom, had now a keener perception than when I arrived out of the powerful sunlight.

To test whether the photographic lens would see what had at first been hidden from me, I set my camera in a position to receive the image, leaving it there for a liberal exposure. And since my presence was not a necessary condition of this experiment, I set off for a stroll in the open air—an example Solomon lost no time in following. Outside the cave we found a number of sulky villagers muttering together; but, paying no heed to them, we took our saunter in the neighbourhood.



Entrance to Cave at Endor—the
reputed Cave of the Witch

Harold Copping.

The state of affairs to which we returned, about ten minutes later, put the people of Endor lower than ever in my estimation. It seemed that, if they held aloof from the cave while all three of us were there, their united courage was equal to confronting a single stranger temporarily cut off from his allies. So by twos and threes they had swarmed into the cavern, to squat around the artist and scoff, snarl, and spit at him, while he went on quietly with his work.

"But I'm glad you've come back, Solomon," added my brother, as he put some finishing touches to his sketch, "for I should like you to ask them why they have been behaving in this silly and undignified way."

"They say," explained the dragoman, after making indignant inquiries, "that it a great shame you come here to bewitch their spring."

Meanwhile I had been relieved to find that, whatever they may have thought of my camera, they had lacked the hardihood to kick it over.

CHAPTER XII

In Issachar

Nain—A well surrounded by flowers—"The soup of the shepherds"—Aniseed and a hailstorm—Eagles on Little Hermon—Insanitary Shunem—Its inert inhabitants—Inside a mud house—Making pastry with pease—A line of hungry sparrows—Mount Gilboa—Crossing the Plain of Esdraelon—Jezreel and its watch-tower—Children, camels, and poultry—A rainbow across the blood-red earth—Jenin—Visit from a Turkish official—A medley of noises—The refreshing incense of early morning—My horse's unrequested jump—A warning and a bog—We nearly lose our horses—"The Ditch of Joseph."

RIDING from Endor, we saw in the lonely landscape a group of silent women gathering tares. And soon we came to Nain.

Nestling amid palm-trees and hedges of prickly pear, the well proved a beautiful old arched piece of ruddy masonry. Water issued along the groove of a projecting stone, and above that, as though for ventilation, was a sort of window. Through it I peered into damp darkness.

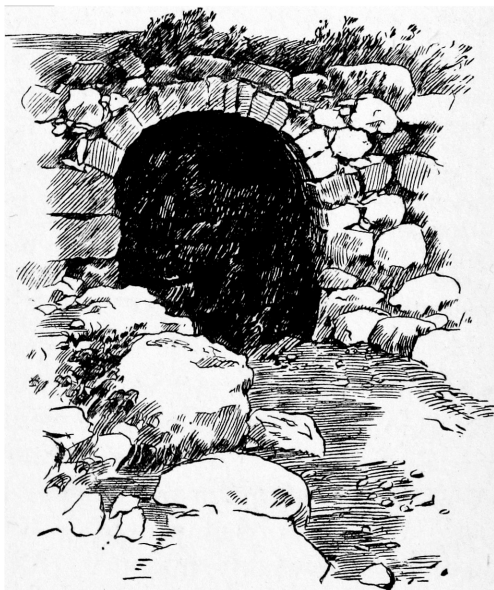
All round the well a wild geranium grew luxuriant.

"That," Solomon explained, "is soup of the

shepherds. The flowers are cooked by the Bedouins to make what you call tea. With onions and sour lemons it very nice salad. When there is famine all of the plant the Bedouins eat. It very healthy for the chest."

Passing out of Nain, we were crossing a field of aniseed

when there burst upon us a hail-storm of such fury that, hastily dismounting from our frightened horses, we had all we could do to check a stampede. But ten minutes



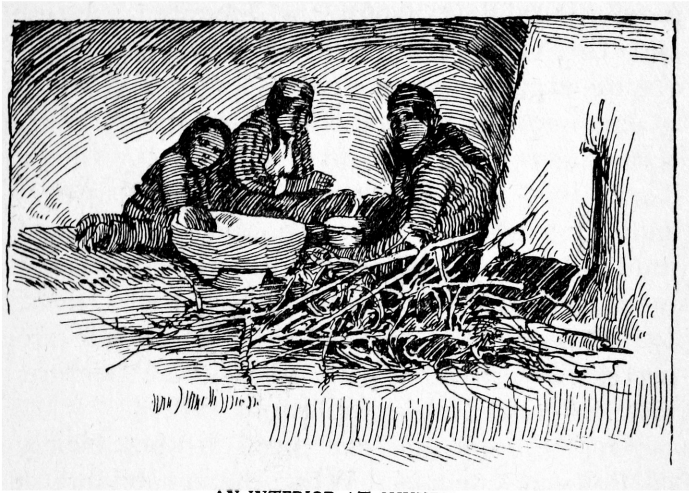
later the sun came out to dry our saturated clothes; and, pushing on, we were soon skirting the base of Little Hermon—a pleasant eminence which, in the domain of natural history, provided a disappointment. Solomon had encouraged us to expect glimpses of numerous

gazelles ambling about the mountain slopes. But the only creatures I saw up there were several eagles perched on projecting rocks.

Approaching Shunem through a dainty cultivated grove, we thought what a pretty village it must be. But Shunem disappointed our eyes and offended our noses. A dirty disorder of mud hovels divided by pathways encumbered by garbage—that was what we saw and smelt. Insanitary areas in the Western world are necessarily associated with civilized architecture. Shunem looked like a prehistoric slum.

And here we met one more distinct variety of Palestine people. What the inhabitants of Shunem appeared to lack was ambition. They seemed stricken with inertia, as though life, reduced to a dull round of dirt and laziness, had lost all interest for them. Our arrival did not serve to rouse them from their stupor. A want of spirit obviously rendered them equally incapable of Nazareth friendliness and Endor hostility.

Now I came to think of it, we had our first clue to the mental condition of that village before we actually reached it. For, as we approached the cultivated grove, a listless appeal for baksheesh sounded in our ears, and, turning our heads, we found that it came from two untidy youngsters lying on the ground some fifty yards away. Since neither of them moved,



AN INTERIOR AT SHUNEM

it was clear that, if we were minded to grant their petition, we must needs carry our offering to them.

"They seem pretty cool young customers," I said to Solomon. But he only shrugged his shoulders, and told me about a drowning Arab who, with his last gurgling words, demanded baksheesh of the two Europeans who were vainly striving to rescue him.

We made bold to enter one of the forbidding dwellings, where we found, asquat on the floor, two cats, one dog, and a woman. She smiled no welcome, nor betrayed any resentment at our intrusion. Replying in sluggish monosyllables to Solomon's questions, she continued to pound

pease in an earthenware vessel—with a view, as we learnt, to the making of pastry. If externally the walls presented an uncouth aspect of dried mud, they were lined evenly enough inside with a surface of cement.

An interior so simple and primitive suggested a deep interest. For this apartment could scarcely be different, one supposed, from that other chamber in Shunem where, years ago, a faithful woman set a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick, to serve the needs of Elisha.

From that sombre village I brought away one bright memory. A flock of hungry-looking sparrows alighted in a long line on a mud wall, to address urgent chirpings to us as we went by. It was the daintiest demand for baksheesh that had happened on our travels; and the concessions we made from our luncheon parcels met with a flutter of joyous appreciation. It certainly was a point to the credit of Shunem that its sparrows were so unafraid of man.

Gaining the sweet-smelling open country, we descended to the place where dismayed Saul and his people were overwhelmed in battle. Storm clouds lowered over the gloomy heights of Mount Gilboa, and the sky threw great shadows on the Plain of Esdraelon, which stretched in drear perspective to the limit of sight. We rode on in silence and awe to find geography so impressively in key with history.

After a ride of some three miles on the level ground, and having crossed the new railway track, we mounted a gradual slope to Jezreel, conspicuous afar off by reason of its one building rising high above the others—a fact startling to the imagination. And, indeed, that modern watch-tower of Jezreel may well be standing on the old site.

A jumble of camels, poultry, and people perambulating ground black and damp with dung and dirt—such was Jezreel. No less squalid than Shunem, it was far more animated. The adults regarded us with amused toleration, while herds of children, running round our horses, cried with one voice for baksheesh. We did not linger in their midst, for the day was drawing to a close, and, as Solomon anxiously pointed out, we were still two hours' ride from our camp.

By another route we again descended into the Plain, and behold! the scene spoke once more of the stricken army of Israel pursued by the Philistine hosts. In that great arena the fancy saw a lake of blood. For an expanse of the ruddy earth, newly turned by the plough, was bathed in crimson light from the sun that hung low in the western sky. And suddenly we saw the flat vista arched by a great, unbroken rainbow. The Plain of Esdraelon will ever live in my mind as a theatre of vast and awful effects.

We rode into camp at Jenin when the warm afterglow of sunset mingled with the pale light of the moon. And now the spirit of all things was changed, and we relapsed into homely experiences. On a stretch of turf before our tents, three little laughing Turkish boys—I precisely state a fact—were playing hop, skip, and jump. Fellow travellers had bivouacked, in tents like ours, not a hundred yards away. Over where the city lay, three graceful palm-trees were nodding in the breeze. The voices of frogs sounded in sustained chorus. And a fat Turkish soldier came to examine our passports.

By pantomimic imitation of florid penmanship, he showed a ready grasp of the nature of my calling, the case of my brother presenting more difficulty to the official mind. But it was on a series of attempts to pronounce “Copping” that our visitor concentrated his energies, he being conscientiously bent on jotting down a phonetic equivalent in Arabic.

I shall always remember Jenin for a night of noises. Soldiers blowing whistles joined with the splash of heavy rain to assist a din in which braying asses, howling jackals, and the unceasing frogs took part. And this was the greater hardship for us since, because of the extent of country to be traversed on the morrow, we had to breakfast and be moving soon after sunrise. For, under Solomon’s arrangements, we were visiting

Jenin merely for the advantage it afforded as a camping ground: conditions suitable for sleep being apparently deemed of less account than the protection of soldiers.

But early rising brought its rich reward. Wondrous pleasant we found it to be riding through fair Issachar in the cool, sweet morning. Purple and pale gold were the mountains, and the air was perfumed with honey and flowers. How young the day was we had droll reminder in the aspect of a little owl that stood belated on a stone by the wayside, blinking sleepily at so much daylight.

My brother and I, not for the first time, broke into a trot—such was the practical proficiency we had by this time acquired in the saddle. But presently I was to perform a much more noteworthy, if quite unintentional, feat of horsemanship.

There being no definite track to restrict our line of advance, I was somewhat apart from the others on approaching a dry water-course of some considerable width. Each bank had a gradual slope, and that my horse would walk down one bank and up the other was a supposition to which I contemplated no alternative. What actually happened was this. When we arrived at the first bank, my horse's body straightened under me, a gust of air fanned my temples, and we were on the other bank.

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I was still a prey to startled astonishment, not yet fully realizing the exploit to which my acrobatic quadruped had made me a party, when Solomon rode up in hot haste to offer his congratulations.

"Very fine you make your horse jump," was his enthusiastic way of putting it. As a matter of fact, my horse had made me jump, and in more senses than one.

Since I am telling of things in the order of their happening, that little episode of frivolous panic now leads, by an incongruous transition, to the story of a stern peril in which all four horses and riders were involved.

We were on the Plain of Dotham when my brother and I noted our two companions in grave altercation. We wished to visit the spot where Joseph was placed in the pit by his brethren; and Solomon had asked Mahomet if he knew in which direction it lay. Thereupon Mahomet, urging the wisdom of avoiding a risk, had begged that we give up the idea of going there. Cautious Solomon questioned him narrowly, though without discovering the nature of the peril referred to. Indeed, it became clear that Mahomet did not himself know what it was. He had heard there was a peril, that was all he could say, and he begged that we would keep away from the "Ditch of Joseph," as the place was named by the Arabs. Repeating what he

had heard, perplexed Solomon left the decision to us.

My brother agreed with me in attaching small importance to the vague fears of an unlettered Moslem, and so our decision was to push on, coupled with an undertaking to come back for Mahomet should he prefer not to share in the adventure. After that, we all set off for the Ditch of Joseph, our worthy muleteer taking it upon himself to lead the way. For it seemed that, some years before he heard evil of the place, he went there with a party of travellers.

When within a couple of hundred yards of the well—for Mahomet pointed it out to Solomon, who pointed it out to us—we



“WE WERE SKIRTING A PLANTATION OF FRUIT TREES”

happened upon soft ground. Riding in close formation, we were skirting a plantation of fruit trees. It was a beautiful scene of sheltered and luxuriant vegetation. And, as I say, we chanced to be treading wet earth—an experience so familiar as to excite no attention.

An appalling development came abruptly, and the air suddenly rang with our shouts. Each rider became aware that the other horses were sinking. At least, my first knowledge merely concerned the plight of my companions. But a second later I realized, by the behaviour of my own poor beast, that my case was not different from theirs. We were all floundering in a bog.

The mind, the voice, the limbs—how quick they are to act in an emergency. By some imperious instinct, here were all four of us most energetically doing the right thing to be done when one is sinking in a bog on horseback—nay, not merely doing it, but employing part of our strength in exhorting each other to do the same.

“Keep going! Don’t stop, whatever you do! Bang away! Stick to it! Keep him moving!”

As nearly as I afterwards remembered, those were the wild words with which the two Englishmen awoke the echoes. And the sense of the shouting in Arabic was manifestly much the same.

I had, earlier in the morning, plucked a cane of anise to serve me for a goad. With that I rained blows on my struggling, panting, terrified

steed. Solomon had the stout walking-stick his right hand ever clutched. Mahomet, on the heavily-burdened horse, swung the short length of stout rope he was wont to use as a whip. My brother had only his heels.

Since at each plunge forward our horses sank high above their knees, we must on no account suffer them to pause in their struggles. It was horrible to hear the suction of the mud as they extricated their limbs.

Of the extent of the bog we had no knowledge. A deeper stratum of yielding ground might lie ahead ; yet go ahead we must as our only chance of safety. To turn was impossible ; a gentle bias either to right or left was the only latitude allowed to discretion.

My brother and I were proceeding abreast, only a few feet apart, with Solomon just ahead of him, and with Mahomet, at a longer interval, ahead of me. I took guidance by what befell the muleteer.

He was a picture of delirious energy. At one instant his case looked desperate, the horse almost inextricable, the saddle-bags dipping into the mire. But with whirling blows, and a roar of admonition, he made the panting brute try towards the left for a better foothold—a manœuvre that turned out well. Inch by inch, he won his way to firm ground.

Having my clue, I headed in the same

direction, and with the same success. Solomon meanwhile was forging to the right, and gaining no advantage. Thus my brother, who had begun by following the horse in front of him, was put to some delay in amending his course. But he joined Mahomet on hard earth ere Solomon reached safety on the opposite side of the bog.

Physical peril, if stimulating enough while it lasts, is somewhat sedative in its after-effects; and we were all in the key to be soothed by the place we had wrestled with death to arrive at. And, indeed, the Well of Dotham occurs in as tranquil a scene as heart could desire, with that luxuriant plantation of figs and apples and apricots on one side, and, on the other, an expanse of flowery land stretching to the visible track which, throughout the centuries, has been worn by the feet of merchants travelling between Gilead and Egypt.

Leaving our bemired horses free to graze on a stretch of new grass near at hand, we sat on stones beside the Ditch of Joseph, which, instead of assuming the form of a fountain, answered to English notions of a well. For Western eyes, however, there was an interesting innovation in that the welling water flowed from the sunken shaft into a semicircular stone horse-trough—an arrangement enabling cattle to quench their thirst without polluting the main supply. The overflow coursed over the ground to saturate

the morass into which we had floundered. Thus at the time of our visit there was an abundance of water. But it was easy to conceive of natural conditions—exceptional drought, or an obstruction to the spring—when a well, or pit, in that situation might be dry.

While we tarried at that peaceful spot, three women came there to fill their water-pots. Nor did Solomon suffer them to depart unchallenged by friendly jest and greeting. For some elation is natural to a dragoman who has evaded so dire a mischance as the loss of four valuable horses.

Meanwhile I had turned my attention to photographic possibilities suggested by the presence of our smiling visitors—a circumstance that did not escape their notice.

“They say you must not make a picture of them,” Solomon interpreted, “because they are poor people, so they not look pretty.”

When he transmitted my reassuring, and indeed complimentary, reply, those women made haste to shake their heads. But it was easy to see that they were pleased.

From the Plain of Dotham our journey lay through many an ancient olive grove, and across hills whereof the southern slopes were cut into narrow terraces. Old, gnarled, leafless vines lay here and there upon those stony pathways, which rose tier upon tier in proof of the widespread cultivation of grapes in years gone by.



CHAPTER XIII

Samaria

Paradoxical Sebastiyeh—Architectural memorials of Herod the Great—Childish adults—The traffic in antiquities—Solomon the virtuoso—Interrupted excavations—Tomb of John the Baptist—An undignified schoolmaster: his appeal for baksheesh—A civilized dinner amid barbaric surroundings—Its disconcerting sequel: a deadly snake under our rug—Strange uproar in a peaceful glen—The quaint explanation—Our encampment at Shechem—An embarrassed tobacconist—Uses of the turban—The kissing child: ingenious method of securing baksheesh.

SAMARIA—known to-day as Sebastiyeh—is one of the most astonishing, interesting, and paradoxical places I have ever seen. More vividly, I should think, than any other town in the world, it shows the centuries reversed, with all progress working backwards. For at



Harold Copping.

The Columns at Samaria.

Samaria the rude barbarism of the present day is revealed in bewildering contrast to what I am tempted to call the modern civilization of a remote past.

Gradually mounting through disused vineyards, we came to level ground canopied by venerable olive trees; and, on emerging from that thicket, we beheld something which, by its startling incongruity with the surrounding scene, held me speechless. Upstanding amid the tangle of bushes were great stone columns, stationed in a long line at orderly intervals—columns thrice as tall as a man, and of a circumference one's two arms could only just embrace.

They were white, and therefore conspicuous amid the jungle of greenery; and, since time had etched evenly into the enduring stone, they remained of perfect symmetry. Gazing at that perspective of some sixty columns, I chanced to think of them as so much solid human property; which suggested the questions, 'To whom did they now belong, and whose wealth had paid for their erection? Western scholarship returns an assured answer, but it is an answer that sets the mind reeling.

Augustus gave Samaria to Herod the Great, who enriched it with superb architecture, including a colonnade that adorned the principal street of the city. We were looking at some columns of that colonnade.

In thinking of the enduring qualities of the works of man, one is apt to measure possibilities by such length of life as belongs to English buildings of to-day. But here—let those realize the fact who can—was masonry that had survived the hazards of war, tempests, and earthquake during many centuries.

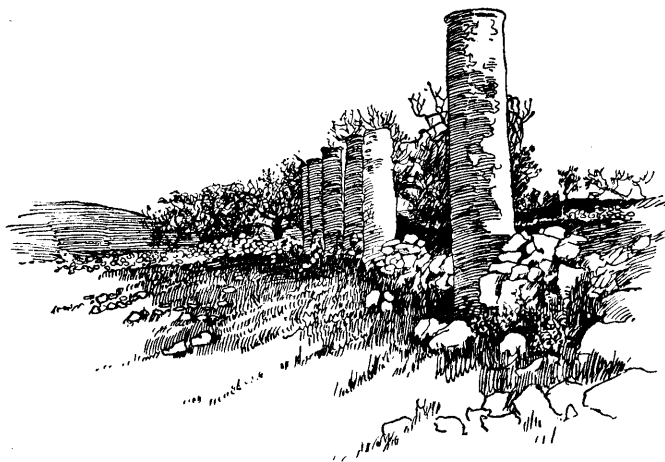
Pushing on, we came in sight of Samaria, or, rather, of two Samarias—one a cluster of spacious ruins, still bearing the stamp of architectural excellence; the other modern, and built largely of mud. Ascending to a grassy plateau, we arrived at our camp, around which a goodly company of Bedouins were clustered.

It grows, I fear, monotonous that I should keep on recording variety in the population of Palestine. But Samaria provided so distinctive a class of inhabitants that I am tempted to describe them in terms that negative each leading characteristic of the people we had seen elsewhere. They were not hostile. They were not dignified. They were not inert. They were not intelligent.

Conceive a crowd of brown-skinned simpletons, dressed in rags and full of curiosity, who will come clustering around you in a fever of innocent excitement to see your camera, but who will all run helter-skelter away if you so much as say "Boo!" to them. Such were the people of Samaria. Apart from size, the only difference

between adults and children was that the former seemed rather more childish than the latter. Whichever way I went, I had a procession at my heels—all those docile eyes wide with eager wonder.

From a little way off, I noticed Solomon



"UPSTANDING AMID THE TANGLE OF BUSHES WERE GREAT
STONE COLUMNS"

fetch a chair from our dining-tent, and sit down to converse at ease with certain of Samaria's citizens. The incident proved a great draw. Full-grown men, their faces alight with enthusiasm, set off at top speed, in competition with little children, to join the dense circumference of human beings. As I afterwards learnt, Solomon had but consented to see such portable antiquities as were on offer.

Delving in the soil, and ransacking ancient tombs, the Arabs necessarily happen occasionally upon interesting relics of bygone civilizations. At some places in Palestine they also do business in imported counterfeits; so that the traveller, in making purchases, must needs be circumspect—a point on which Solomon gave us frequent cautions. It is, however, a fact, I think, that he himself stood in greater need of those warnings than we did.

My brother and I bought only such objects as pleased us by their quaintness or beauty—it being a further condition of each purchase that the price should be moderate, not to say nominal; and therefore we ran small risk of being wronged, since a beautiful thing is still beautiful even though it be but a replica.

Solomon, on the other hand, being something of a virtuoso, and having his brain ever on fire with the hope of unique and priceless finds, proved capable of paying substantial sums for antiquities about which, on subsequent re-examination, he came to have his doubts. Yet presumably the collector, in this as in other spheres, must set the occasional reward against a constant risk. At least he has the excitement of the hunt, even when spoils of the chase are denied to him.

Of all the antiquities acquired on our travels by Solomon, I should expect those he purchased

at Samaria to turn out best. Owing to local conditions, genuine relics were more accessible to the natives, it would almost seem, than spurious substitutes could be. For one thing, though on the site of an opulent city, where many kings of Israel were believed to be buried, Samaria had never until recently been subjected to systematic excavation. And here let me say incidentally that of the huge antiquities already mentioned—the Herod columns—there seemed no end. Many occurred on our camping-ground, one stretching half across the floor of our sleeping-apartment; and those recumbent memorials of the past, deeply embedded in the soil, hinted at the wealth of rare relics that doubtless lay deeper.

Of this buried treasure we had more definite evidence when, on the morning following our arrival, we were exploring Samaria. For we came upon a great gaping pit newly dug to a depth of a dozen feet or more. It seemed there had been a recent local impulse to explore below for the royal tombs of ancient Israel, it being a reasonable surmise that each would prove a repository of marketable rarities. But the work, after reaching the stage at which we found it, had been interrupted by order of the Sultan, a stern message coming from Constantinople that all subterranean exploration must cease.

Ladders still remained standing in the shaft; so, while I stayed above to photograph the scene, my brother descended into the roomy cavity, where he found that the prohibition must have come at a tantalizing moment for the excavators, since they had already laid bare the entrance to an ancient sepulchre.

We found many other matters to interest us in Samaria. Descending into a moat-like area, we entered the gigantic ruin of a church erected by the Crusaders to mark the spot where, according to a tradition which modern research does not challenge, John the Baptist was buried. Little remains but roofless walls adorned with buttresses, arched windows, and doorways—roofless walls that derive a further charm from the roothold they afford to many shrubs and a conspicuous little tree.

Wandering in paved courtyards open to the sky, we came upon a small domed structure of later date, and erected, it is supposed, over the actual tomb of the Baptist. Here Solomon also pointed out, on the authority of a local guide, the graves of Elisha and Obadiah.

Ever and anon we heard the voices of many children raised in unison—a commotion to which we had the clue when, on coming to a large apse, we beheld a boys' school in full session. The pupils with their slates sat upon low benches that formed a square within the lines of the



"A GREAT GAPING PIT NEWLY DUG"

chamber, while in a central situation at the back the schoolmaster was enthroned on a large wooden chair before his desk—a massive, bearded, complacent man in picturesque blue gown and white turban. Matting on the stone floor was held in position by ponderous fragments of masonry. Sunlight streamed into that spacious vaulted recess, adding brightness to a homely picture which suggested a dame's school of Victorian England.

Our arrival, I am afraid, caused a sad inter-

ruption to scholastic routine. But perhaps for those grinning little Moslems there was a lesson to be learnt, and one making for a wider conception of humanity, by noting the behaviour of their visitors. The two strangers from a foreign land 'were crossing and recrossing the classroom in quest of photographic points of view; while Solomon and the local guide sat down unceremoniously on one of the trestled planks that served as a table for certain of the pupils.

Meanwhile the hospitable schoolmaster had gone hurrying off to fetch us coffee; and the excitement with which, on his return, he espied our cameras, and the alacrity with which he ran to his chair to pose for the picture, revealed an innocent and juvenile frame of mind not often to be met with in a schoolmaster.

I did not find myself respecting this volatile and pleasant-looking pedagogue, but one could hardly fail to like him. To a teacher's character, by the way, the faces of his pupils supply a good index. Than those youngsters of Samaria, I never saw a class that looked less cowed. On the other hand, they did not seem very studious or enlightened children.

When we were minded to be moving on, this unusual schoolmaster, leaving his pupils to look after themselves, insisted on coming with us. Walking beside my brother and myself, he

proved very chatty (though unfortunately in Arabic); and since he conducted us to the mosque, and led the way to the top of its tower, we were not altogether surprised to learn, in an aside from Solomon, that this amiable man was the priest as well as the schoolmaster.

From the minaret we gained a fine view of our surroundings, and I secured a photograph of modern Samaria as viewed from above. It looked like what might be left of a citadel that has undergone prolonged and severe bombardment. Windows supplied the only suggestion of constructive skill. For the rest, mud was supplemented by rough, irregular pieces of stone—obviously the ancient city's contribution to the modern village. A hooded structure on one of the flat roofs was a Palestine bee-hive, made with tubes of sun-dried mud.

When the time came for saying good-bye to the priest, my brother and I received a shock. For that great man extended his palm and earnestly petitioned for "Baksheesh! Baksheesh!" We gave him some, and he received it with voluble gratitude.

No; I could not respect the schoolmaster of Samaria. But seldom have I encountered a personality that interested me more. Here was an entire village reflecting the individuality of one man. And if those people showed no symptom of intellectual culture, at least they

were ingenuous and good-hearted, with minds unpolluted by any poisonous antipathy to another race and religion. The mildest and kindest of barbarians—that was the thought I had of them as, running the gauntlet of their trustful, wondering eyes, we passed to our tents.

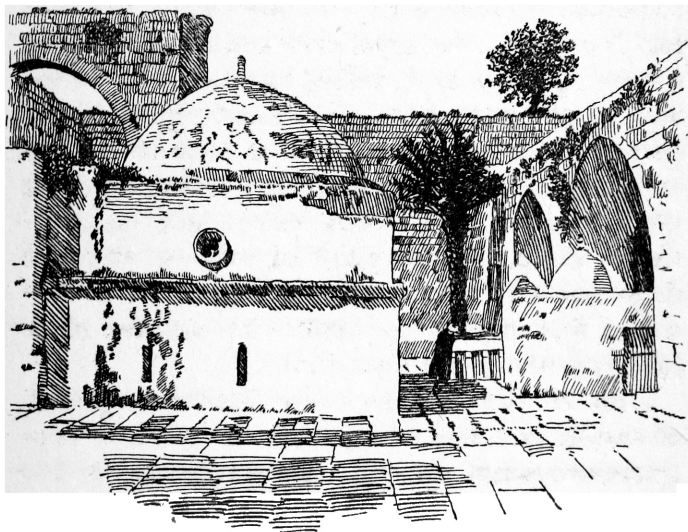
When my brother and I sat down to a four-course luncheon, graced by snowy tablecloth, gleaming glass, and shining silver, we marvelled at the strange contrast our imported civilization presented to the scene outside. How completely were comfort and luxury secured within the charmed circle of our crimson shelter! With such reflections we sipped the mild wine of Mount Carmel, and lolled back at our ease. But this complacency proved to repose on an insecure foundation.

Since the camp had to move that afternoon, the work of striking the tents was soon in hand. When the table had been carried out, a muleteer began to roll up the rug that had lain under our feet. But on a sudden he shrank back, his cry of alarm bringing Mahomet and Solomon quickly to the scene. A snake had been concealed beneath the rug.

“It’s a killer! It’s a killer!” shouted horrified Solomon, as he made ready with his walking-stick. And soon at his hands the venomous thing lay dead.

Leaving Samaria behind us, we rode across

lovely hills and dales where throve the olive, the fig, and the pomegranate ; and at one time we journeyed beside a rocky glen full of beauty and peace and the song of birds. Instinctively my brother and I paused, that our eyes might take their fill of a delightful scene ; and, as we waited



SITE OF TOMB OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

and watched, the solitude was suddenly invaded by a muffled uproar that came rumbling up from one direction to awaken eerie echoes from the other. We looked about us in bewilderment. So far in our experience of Palestine the spirit of placidity had everywhere reigned. What din was this that assailed our hearing—here, of all

places, at a veritable shrine of peace and repose ?

The disturbance grew to be distinguishable as the strident and urgent shouting of men ; and the next minute we were looking down at one of the most grimly grotesque processions I ever remember to have seen. It was a string of mules and horses and donkeys, each animal supporting a swaying heap of bundles, boxes, chairs, tables, and I know not what. Two squatting men were part of the luggage, while other men ran beside and behind the heavily freighted beasts, assailing them with expostulations, blows, and an occasional stone. A company of robbers who had despoiled a village and were fleeing with their booty from avenging justice—to me the affair looked nothing less than that.

One of the fugitives, on looking upward, obviously saw the two horsemen standing conspicuous against the sky. He waved his hand to us ; and then, in a flash of understanding, we recognised George the waiter, and our own caravan. So this was what our beautiful camp looked like when travelling along the road ! Viewed from a new standpoint, our imported Western civilization was not without a suggestion of primitive barbarism after all.

We proceeded on our way in a chastened spirit, marvelling not a little to have found ourselves responsible—if one traces effects to

their cause—for the riot of noise that had been to us so perplexing an enigma.

My brother and I, accompanied by Solomon and Mahomet, were given to pauses on our journey, and deviations from the direct route ; nevertheless I was astounded when, an hour later, we arrived at the outskirts of a populous city, and found, on a broad area of turf, our tents pegged into position, Simon busy over his charcoal fire, and George already laying the cloth for dinner.

Concerning Nablus (the ancient Shechem), Solomon had warned us that we should not like its people and they would not like us. But such preliminary dealings as we had with them encouraged me to believe that he might prove mistaken. Promptly upon our arrival, the thoughtful dragoman made known my desire for some tobacco ; and I had scarcely washed the dust of travel from my hands when I turned to find, at the opening of the tent, a bare-headed, swarthy individual who, with much bowing and smiling, extended a small white parcel for my acceptance—a parcel which, when I undid the folded linen wrapper, proved to contain a suitable sample of the commodity I wished for. Having learnt beforehand from Solomon what would be the probable price, I tendered the necessary coins, which my visitor accepted without demur and duly pocketed ;

whereupon I readjusted the wrapper about my purchase and put it in my travelling-trunk.

But the obliging local tradesman did not take his departure. In a flutter of embarrassment, he entered upon some voluble Arabic explanations of which I failed to catch the drift.

At first I feared he must be dissatisfied with his payment. But no; on my testing the matter by producing some money, he shook his head and pointed eagerly to the travelling-trunk. Having sold me the tobacco, he apparently wanted it back! The situation was quite beyond me, so I went and fetched Solomon, whose explanation of the mystery was attended by more chuckling than the occasion seemed to warrant. It appeared that I had bought only the tobacco; it was desired that I would kindly return the wrapper.

After I had done so, it was my turn to feel embarrassed; for, having received the white strip, the tobacconist carefully smoothed its creases and wound it about his brows.

I do hope he quite understood that I had not knowingly endeavoured to despoil him of his turban. After his kindness in pressing it into my service, that would indeed have been an ungenerous attempt at sharp practice. However, as I was comforted to notice, his manner of departure hinted at relief rather than resentment.

Meanwhile I found myself entertaining a

growing respect for Eastern headgear, which, unlike the Western billycock, was clearly capable, at the hands of a resourceful wearer, of serving many auxiliary purposes. I did not forget the part played by the turban in my descent of the Great Pyramid.

My second human experience at Nablus, like my first, scarce tended to confirm the harsh judgment Solomon had passed on the population. I was seated on a stool some little way from our tents, when a pretty child toddled up to me, climbed upon my lap, and, putting her tiny arms about my neck, gave me a warm, delicious kiss.

The spontaneous caress of innocent childhood is, I think, the most flattering mark of confidence a man can receive ; and that this winsome mite should have singled me out for her favours set my heart, I confess, in a flutter of pleasure.

Following a natural impulse, I gave her something to buy sweets with—which led to gratifying proof of my pet's intelligence. Instead of putting the coins in her mouth, or holding them in the unreliable custody of a chubby fist, she solemnly deposited them in the pocket of her pinafore. Then, to my regret, she slipped off my lap and toddled away.

I am not, I hope, of a jealous disposition. Yet I must confess to a feeling of disappointment at what now befell. Chancing at that moment to emerge from our sleeping-tent, my

brother not only met my little darling, but was attracted by the sweet appeal of her upturned face.

I saw him stoop to pat her cheek, and then—could I believe my eyes?—she put her arms round his neck and kissed him. But the coincidence went farther. For my beaming brother had recourse to the same method of pleasing the little one that I had adopted; his gift joining mine. I have but to add that my disappointment gave place to sheer disillusionment when, a minute later, that affectionate infant was kissing a muleteer—a dirty, unshaven, blear-eyed muleteer.

She was, I suppose, the bread-winner of the family. At any rate, the man who afterwards joined her—and who, having carefully picked the pinafore pocket, carried her off on his shoulder—had not the look of a strenuous toiler.



View from Jacob's Well.

Harold Copping.

CHAPTER XIV

Russian Pilgrims

The Samaritans—Visit from the High Priest's son—Narrow-minded Nablus—Solomon's missing tobacco-box—He consigns two boys to prison—A disconcerting discovery—In the Vale of Shechem—Gerizim and Ebal—At Jacob's Well—On the Plain of Lubban—A mile of Russian pilgrims—Siberian furs in Palestine sunshine—Teapots and simplicity—The old woman's accident—Unseen singers in the wilderness—Lamentable condition of the pilgrims—Bethel under a blue sky—First sight of Jerusalem.

NABLUS has a population of 20,000 souls, including the pathetic remnant of that people who, originating from the ancient Israelites, have survived through the centuries as a race distinct from the Jews. There are about as many Samaritans in Nablus as of Herod columns in Samaria. O most awe-inspiring links with the past—these of human flesh, those of enduring stone.

When we had dined, soon after arriving at the city that once was Shechem, Solomon ushered into our tent a tall, thin man with a black beard and a countenance lacking in animation. He was, we learnt, a son of the High

Priest of the Samaritans—a visitor, therefore, who commanded in the abstract our warm interest. Yet I can but reveal him to my readers in the light of the little human weakness by which he revealed himself to us.

Returning only perfunctory monosyllables to the overtures of friendly courtesy we tendered through our interpreter, he busied himself with a paper parcel, whence he drew small cards on which a portrait of his father was reproduced. These he submitted to our scrutiny, exclaiming “Franc! franc!” by way of indicating the price at which he was offering his goods for sale—a price, by the way, which approximately represented the rate per thousand at which an English jobbing printer would be glad to turn them out.

My brother bought a copy, surrendering a quarter midjidie (or the rough equivalent of 10*d.*) in payment. But good intentions woe-fully missed their reward. The face of the son of the High Priest was no longer expressionless. It had become a mirror of frowning displeasure; nor could we be deaf to a fretful ring in the Arabic mutterings that accompanied his labour of doing up the parcel.

“What is he looking so black about?” my astonished brother asked.

Solomon shrugged his philosophical shoulders, and explained: “He say he not take the trouble

to come if he know he only sell one card." And thus, however much our visitor had interested us on his arrival, he denied us occasion to feel regret at his departure.

Next day we walked through Nablus—undoubtedly a fine city; but I did not like it. True, the eye was pleased by colour effects and by noble buildings and some beautiful old archways. True, again, we went over the superb English hospital and saw corridors of ailing Moslems under the healing influence of Christian kindness and Western science.

But Solomon's prophecy came true: because that large busy population of Mohammedans did not like me, I did not like them. Here and there in the streets they spat at us; which is so pitiable a thing to do, and argues a mind so lacking in intelligence and culture, that Nablus is a city I take no pleasure in remembering.

But while my disapproval of the people applied only to those we met within the city, Solomon's distrust also embraced those who visited us on our camping-ground. In particular was his ire inflamed against a group of boys who hovered around the tents, though they did so in a spirit of playfulness and curiosity, as I thought, rather than with any felonious intent.

Nor had anything happened to cause me to modify this opinion when, shortly before noon, we mounted our horses and departed from

Nablus. Now, naturally, all thought of the youngsters quickly passed out of my mind. But when we had been half an hour upon the road, the question of their morals once more arose. Searching his pockets in a panic, Solomon proclaimed the loss of his tin tobacco-box—a possession he had prized so greatly that there were no bounds to his anger against the Nablus youths, of whose guilt in the matter he refused to entertain a doubt.

Following so pat upon his misgivings, there certainly seemed some sort of *prima facie* case against those boys; but, as my brother and I pointed out, suspicion was not proof, and of evidence there was none. Brushing aside these niceties of Western jurisprudence, wrathful Solomon eagerly invited our co-operation on these lines:

“If you stay here, Mahomet give you your lunch while quickly I am gone again to Nablus. You not waste any time, because I come back before you finish your lunch.”

“We shall be only too pleased, of course,” said my brother. “But I’m afraid you will have your trouble for nothing.”

“The Turkish soldiers—yes, I go to them,” exclaimed Solomon, following his own line of thought. “They listen to what I say.” And the next minute, having slewed round, he was galloping back along the road we had traversed

at a walking pace, the rapidly receding horseman affording a stirring symbol of swift-footed justice.

And, sure enough, by the time we had finished our repast, Solomon came careering back ; and as he drew rein I noted that, whereas his face was empurpled and angry when he departed, he returned with bright eyes and the firm jaw of a man who has received satisfaction.

“Did you get it back?” was our first question.

“No,” said Solomon, “they not tell us where they hide it. But three boys we catch, and the soldiers beat them, and put them in prison.”

At which tidings my brother and I were no less amazed than horrified. Accustomed to cautious deliberation in the administration of the criminal law, with trial by jury, and courts of appeal as further safeguards, we found our Western instincts in revolt against this expeditious Eastern method of squeezing capture, examination, and punishment into the space of a mere luncheon interval—a method which, as it seemed to us, left avenues for the miscarriage of justice. However, nothing availed to shake Solomon’s conviction that retribution had fallen upon the guilty parties—nothing, at least, but the subsequent discovery, which he made with great delight, that he had not lost his tobacco-box after all, it being in the revolver pocket

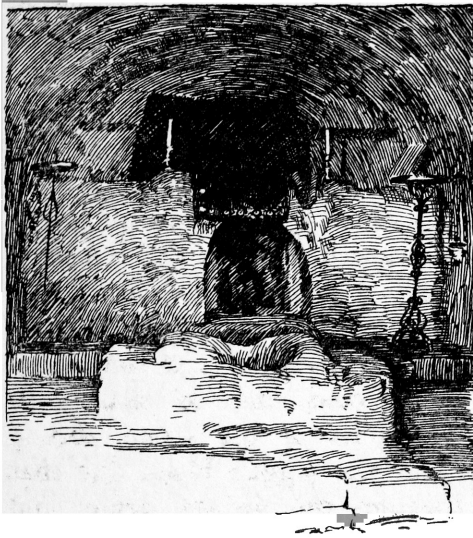
of his breeches, where he now remembered to have placed it.

Of course we told him that, even if it meant a day's delay in our travels, he must return post-haste to Nablus and see to the release and compensation of the youthful victims of his mistake. This course, however, he stoutly refused to take, alleging that, if innocent of the particular offence he had laid to their charge, they were sure to deserve punishment on other grounds, and that in any case a little discipline was good for boys.

We pressed our view with some persistence ; but, while indicating a readiness to take instructions from us on all matters affecting ourselves, Solomon claimed the right to order his personal affairs by the light of his own judgment. And there, I am sorry to say, the matter was left.

Meanwhile we had been traversing a region beautiful in itself and rich with an accumulation of sacred interests. As we passed down the Vale of Shechem, we turned again and yet again to gaze at the grey-green heights of Gerizim and Ebal—Mount of Blessing and Mount of Cursing.

We paused awhile at Jacob's Well. Entering a square area of raised ground margined by a low wall, we descended into a vault full of shadows and solemnity. It was some time before our eyes could discern objects in the dim light.



"AN ANCIENT TIME-WORN STONE"

Then we saw projecting masonry furnished as an altar with candles, cloths, and censers. In the middle of the chamber was an ancient time-worn stone having a large circular aperture that opened down

into the darkness of the earth. With a long exposure, I took a photograph of that old stone, which, according to the inherited knowledge of Christians, Jews, and Mohammedans, marks the mouth of the veritable Jacob's Well.

Our afternoon ride took us across large areas of level ground hemmed about by brown mountains. In one of those expanses, when we had gone the length of it, we found our encampment. This was the Plain of Lubban; and the village of that name—generally identified with Lebonah—was, Solomon said, close at hand. But for once our tents were free of visitors. Whichever

way I looked, there was no man, or dwelling, or beast, nor any sign thereof. The eye swept back over the route we had traversed—a mile of plain encompassed by the gentle-sloping uplands—that vast amphitheatre being one uninterrupted solitude. And next morning, when I emerged from our sleeping-tent, those overnight impressions were renewed. Never had our little party seemed so utterly alone in the wilderness.

I was still looking at that empty, silent landscape, when suddenly my eyes saw something that was so unexpected, and so sharply in contrast with the spirit of the scene, that I stood amazed. But the jagged black line that had emerged through the distant defile, and was stretching towards us in a continuous increase of length, could mean but one thing. Hundreds of human beings were pouring into my solitude.

Soon we all were looking, my brother and myself lending an eager ear to Solomon's explanations :

“Plenty poor Russians you see. I hear they make pilgrimage this month to the Holy Sepulchre. Another party come here two years ago. They hire a ship to bring them, and all of them squeeze tight into the ship—five hundred, six hundred, eight hundred, I cannot say. I not like to be one of them, for they not have much room to lie down or wash themselves.



Stone Wall at Bethel.

Harold Copping.

But they not mind that. They very ignorant people—a great lot of superstition is taught to them in their country. All their life they save money to bring with them. They put their money into their boots so they not lose it, and when they get to the Holy Sepulchre they give it to the Greek Church priest, who write down their name in a book. After that they go back to their own country very happy, because the priest tell them they get to heaven all right when they die.”

What for long held my attention was the number of our visitors. The black line extended to a quarter of a mile; it went on growing to double that length; still it stretched out until three-quarters of a mile must have been the measure—but not yet was the end in sight. It was fascinating to watch that column coming nearer, while far away it continued to emerge through the mountain pass. Not until the head of the procession was close upon us did I at last see the tail. Thus from end to end of the Plain of Lubban the black line extended—a mile of pilgrims.

Now the foremost of those people were passing within a few yards of where we stood, and providing one of the most impressive and pathetic spectacles my eyes have ever looked upon.

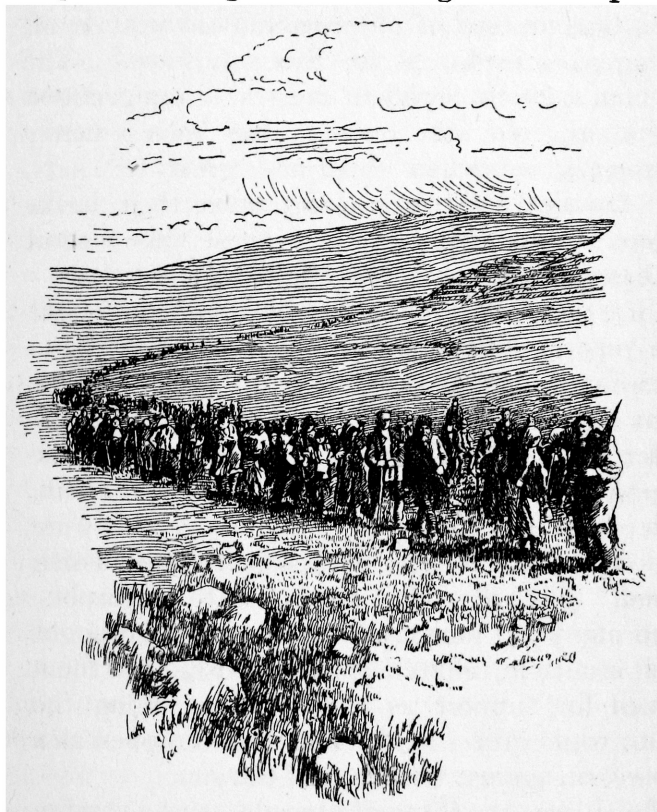
Processions are identified in one's mind with uniforms, orderly marching, and perhaps some

accompanying music. This procession was deficient in all such features of pageantry. It was mainly composed of old men and old women, all being clad in fitness for Siberian snows. The women's thick woollen dresses, cross-gartered stockings, and stout boots, the men's heavy overcoats, astrachan caps, and great felt hats, the bundles and wraps slung upon their backs or coiled around their bodies—these were woeful accessories for a pilgrimage in hot Palestine.

But the strangest feature of their equipment has yet to be mentioned. With the right hand wielding a staff to help them on their way, the men for the most part carried a teapot in the other hand. This hinted at apparently the one creature comfort they had brought with them. They had no tents, no bedding, and, as we were to learn, only a meagre provision of stale Russian bread. But they had brought their teapots. And many of those stout old women had brought their stout old umbrellas, on which most of them leaned for support as they trudged along the plain, while others held them aloft and open as a protection against the glare of the sun.

But it was the kitchen utensils—those shining symbols of a national taste—that held my attention. You may journey from one end of England to the other without meeting a man carrying a naked teapot. And here were hundreds of Russians travelling through a

strange land far from home, and doing that thing. One might have thought the teapots



A MILE OF RUSSIAN PILGRIMS

could be stowed away with other belongings in the bundles. But no; they were the one possession that must be carefully carried by hand.

I liked the resolute way those old wives and

greybeards came trudging along. One instance of individual pluck particularly appealed to me. In that procession of pedestrians a little donkey figured conspicuous, with a stout and elderly dame upon its back ; it being a natural inference that, the old lady having gone lame, means of transportation had become necessary.

Owing to the heat, she perchance had fallen into a doze. At any rate, when within a stone's throw of our tents, she fell off the donkey—an incident that caused a momentary stir among sympathetic compatriots. But three pairs of strong arms picked up the old soul—now quite awake, and smiling apologetically—and hoisted her back into the saddle ; the little donkey then proceeding on its way, apparently refreshed by its brief holiday.

Those Russian peasants might be superstitious and unenlightened—as, by our standards, no doubt they were—but such shortcomings were more than counterbalanced by the obvious simplicity of nature and kindness of heart that distinguished them. The frank and fraternal smiles they gave us were convincing certificates to character. Here and there one of the veterans stepped across to us and, doffing his cap, asked for bread—or so, at least, we interpreted the petition. This caused us a little embarrassment. To give to some would scarce have been fair to the others ; and though I was ashamed of

the way our pampered luxury compared with their deficiencies, we could not invite eight hundred guests to breakfast. And so we gently shook our heads.

Some of their boots were tied with string. Here and there an old fellow's trousers bore a conspicuous patch. In that scattered multitude I saw two men whose medals and military caps marked them out as soldiers. The last of that long procession was a bent old woman who, with the aid of a stout walking-stick, was trudging along as cheerfully as any.

Half a mile ahead of us they settled down to break their fast, making a broad black patch on the side of a mountain. Soon we saw the smoke of their fires ; and it was pleasant to think of all those stout-hearted old folk enjoying their rest and their tea.

When the time came for us to take our departure, we advanced by an alternative route, and so did not pass the pilgrims at close quarters. Under a peerless blue sky, we spent the morning mounting barren heights, gingerly descending dry water-courses strewn with boulders, passing along deep gorges overhung with crumbling rocks—a country of majestic desolation.

Midday found us on a terrace track that occurred half-way up a precipitous slope ; and there, having tethered our horses to some tree trunks, we sat on mossy rocks to take our

luncheon. Nor had we commenced our meal before we heard the music of many human voices raised in song, it filling us with wonder to hear those pleasant cadences in the wilderness. But the mystery was solved when we saw the Russian pilgrims trudge into view on the level ground below. They were singing hymns. And we saw many cross themselves as they turned their faces towards the sky.

By these new manifestations of a reverent spirit, the old folk strengthened their claim to our esteem. But, alas, there is more to tell.

By a coincidence, the pilgrims chose that situation for their halting ground, and so it came to pass that, while we four were eating our lunch up above, those hundreds were similarly engaged down below. They sat in a dense cluster that stretched far away to right and left. And there was this difference between those Russians and ourselves ; while we had a full view of them, they obviously had not noticed us. A further inequality was involved in the shorter time they took over their simple food than we devoted to our more elaborate repast. Wherefore it came about that we were still eating and drinking when they had given themselves up to another occupation.

My brother had just peered over the side when, abruptly withdrawing his head, he exclaimed in disgust :

“Don’t on any account look down again yet, or you won’t want another mouthful.”

Nor did he exaggerate the penalty I paid for my immediate curiosity. Within our view was a sickening sight, which brought to mind the case of monkeys. With garments partially loosened, those poor afflicted pilgrims were busy ridding themselves of vermin. Solomon—it is but fair to add—was disposed to shift responsibility from Russian to Palestine shoulders. He thought that those travellers, lacking tents, would be likely—under local guidance—to take shelter for the night in caves often occupied by Bedouins, whose deplorable personal condition was a matter of notoriety. On the other hand, the pilgrims were doing this thing with a horrid complacency which, it seemed to me, argued use. But whatever the truth of the matter, we lost no time in riding away.

Our route lay at first through beautiful glens. But the landscape came to be more rugged and rocky the farther we advanced, with vegetation dwindling to straggling brown patches. We found our encampment at Bethel, which stands high among the hills, surrounded by a chaos of stony scenery. The sky above was deepest blue.

Without a word, Solomon pointed to the south, where we descried the clustering buildings of a city far away.

It was Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XV

Jerusalem

Eloquent rocks—Arrival at Jerusalem—Greetings from tourists—A broken spell—We part from our horses—The hotel point of view—Discordant revelry—Visiting the bazaars—The Pool of Hezekiah—In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—A stone worn by kisses—Weeping pilgrims : a thrilling scene—Jews at their Wailing Place—The Mount of Olives—In the Haram enclosure—A marvellous system of water storage—The site of the Temple—Palatial shrines of Islam—The Holy Rock—Zion—The Garden of Gethsemane—Lepers and venerable beggars—Calvary.

RIDING from Bethel, we had further experience of a hilly country strewn with stones and formed of rocks. Because of their dress of living green, most landscapes look bright and moist and modern. This landscape looked brown and dry and old. Yet it did not affect one with a sense of sadness and desolation. Those parched hills of Judæa have their own stern stamp of beauty—a beauty not alone of form and colour. They are full of the poetry of exalted associations.

We were nearing Jerusalem. We were



Harold Copping.

Jerusalem—a view of Mount Zion.

moving along the track which, in all ages, has been the natural avenue between Galilee and the Holy City. Of that there was confirmation in the aspect of the rocks underfoot. Where the track crossed them they had been worn by the succession of footfalls that has continued down the centuries—worn to a depression and worn to a polish. Between the present and the past, could there be a physical link more intimate and exact? Of a surety, the feet of Jesus have trodden those same rocks.

Anon the character of our surroundings changed. We were upon an actual road—a broad, even, solid road. To the right was a stretch of pastoral land, where we came upon a herd of goats. Farther on we saw a herd of sheep. Still a little way farther and we met a company of men and camels.

At a bend in the road, our view to the left was unobstructed, and there, close at hand, beyond a stretch of open land, lay a grey city of walls, turrets, and domes, in close association with an isolated tower of a glaring blue that offended the eye.

The foreground contained tourists. I use that word advisedly. Nor will I speak of them as fellow-tourists; for my brother and I, by this time, were untidy enough to rank as travellers. We first met two charmingly dressed English ladies on donkeys, attended by a well-groomed

elderly English gentleman on horseback—an Englishman with an iron-grey moustache exquisitely curled. He drew our attention to the fact that it was a beautiful afternoon. A minute later we had that information emphatically confirmed by two Americans seated on mules.

Please do not suppose that I object to charmingly dressed ladies, aristocratic Englishmen, and cocksure Americans. The case is quite otherwise. But they did not assist me to realize that I had arrived at Jerusalem. Somehow they broke a spell that had held me since, fourteen days before, we set out from Haifa.

There were plenty of other persons in sight. The wilderness and primitive Palestine had become but a memory. As we rode down to the Damascus Gate I had already begun to think of Jerusalem as—the word does not exaggerate my disillusionment—a metropolis.

Having entered the bustling city, we passed along a street of shops. Let it not be supposed that I write in bitterness; they were unmistakable shops—not bazaars. And presently we came to Cook's office, where we surrendered our horses.

Humbly I patted my beast good-bye. Our parting was like the end of a dream—a dream in which, by that fine creature's agency, I had moved for many days through a beautiful

wonderland of long ago. Now I was back again in the modern world ; and henceforth I should go about on foot in the old familiar way.

Once inside the hotel, the idea that we were at Jerusalem, or anywhere else in Palestine, became unthinkable. The people in the lounge were downright Londoners, there were anti-macassars on the chairs, and *The Daily Mail* and Bradshaw lay on a side-table.

Chatting at dinner with several elderly ladies, I made an interesting discovery, namely, that they believed they were at Jerusalem. And Jerusalem, I gathered, was a place where people visit certain sights with tiresome dragomans. To do the place thoroughly, it seemed, required two full days. But I was warned that I should probably be disappointed in Jerusalem. Of course—as one lady informed me in a tone of severity—Jerusalem had very solemn associations ; but after London and Paris, and even Cairo, I must be prepared to find it sadly behind the times.

Dinner over, my brother and I escaped into the open air. A heavy gloom brooded over the city, and but few persons were astir in the streets. Yet to one centre of life we could not shut our eyes and ears—a house whence came a shrill clamour of music, singing, and laughter.

Up a few steps in the frontage, standing in glaring lamplight, was a man who beat a drum

and shouted, to invite persons into his little squalid-looking music-hall. After what the ladies had said, this place figured in my imagination as modern Jerusalem's attempt to keep abreast of the times; and, returning to our hotel, we took our candles and went sorrowfully to bed.

I have said the worst I have to say. Moreover, the discerning reader will not fail to note that these first impressions were affected by a sense of contrast and reaction. Yet something of our disappointment must be felt by all sensitive visitors to Jerusalem; and since the range of most visitors has unfortunately been hitherto restricted to that city and its neighbourhood, here we find the explanation of current testimony which, as I have earlier deplored, fails to credit the Holy Land with its rare beauties and haunting charm.

It served in some measure to revive our spirits, and mend the broken thread of a glorious experience, that next morning we found Solomon awaiting us at the door of the hotel, even though he was now a Solomon on foot, with his toilet brushed and smartened under urban influence. With him we set out to explore Jerusalem. And here I must risk the inference of hasty readers that I speak with two voices about the most interesting city in the world.

We passed through beautiful time-worn gateways into narrow bazaars hung with rich apparel



BEGGARS AT JERUSALEM

and full of venerable Jews with wagging beards—a region where at every turn we had new vistas of grand old archways deep in shadow, with the sunshine gleaming on white walls beyond. We penetrated to the poorest Moslem quarter, where, in humble dwellings of spotless cleanliness, women kissed our hands on receiving unsought alms.

Has the reader ever formed a mental picture of the Pool of Hezekiah? I had not. In cities of Holland one has seen houses backing upon a canal, with projecting windows overhanging the water, which laps the walls below. Conceive that effect on all four sides of a rectangular area—240 feet by 144—and you know what the Pool of Hezekiah looks like. Solomon took us through an arched passage to gain our view of that open reservoir imprisoned by buildings. The water looked very dirty.

We went to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. But this was to isolate ourselves temporarily from the glorious memories with which Jerusalem exalts the mind. I hope I shall not be thought to pass judgment on those who originated, or those who sustain, the pretensions of that church. And, indeed, I am nowise qualified by any right of personal scholarship or research to take sides on debatable questions of sacred archæology. But in that church one is shown sites and relics of which the genuine-

ness is, as a matter of common knowledge, denied by authoritative persons.

Scepticism in such matters prevents reverence—nay, provokes resentment. For in proportion as one would be awed by the true, one is offended by the false. And here was even our dragoman shrugging his shoulders as, passing from shrine to shrine, from chapel to chapel, he told of the specific claim that each represented.

There must be, I am sure, minds with a sympathetic range capable of embracing a clearer understanding of these matters than is possible to me, who am ruled by the thought that there can be no room in religion, as there should be no room in politics or the arts, for any conscious deviation from truth—from pure, brave truth. The best explanation I can guess at is that the Greek and Latin Churches, concerned more for the spiritual than for the intellectual advancement of mankind, hold themselves justified in offering symbolism under a guise of realism. And it came about that, during our stay in the church, we were to witness a remarkable scene which illustrated, and in no unfavourable light, the working of an ecclesiastical system which I may or may not have correctly interpreted. Retracing our steps through the building, we had returned within sight of the domed structure of white and yellow stone, enriched with columns and pilasters, that contained the little low-

pitched vault where, in the effulgence of forty-three gold and silver lamps, we had seen the cracked marble slab that is said to cover the actual rock on which the body of Jesus lay—a marble slab that has been visibly worn by the soft pressure of countless pilgrim kisses.

In contrast with the stillness that reigned in that shrine when we were there, was the confusion of muffled sounds now issuing from it. Drawing near with instinctive haste, we were startled to hear trembling, piteous cries of human anguish.

But a moment later we understood. For from the exit of the chamber there emerged a succession of figures we recognized, by their thick, warm, homely clothing, as some of our Russian pilgrims. It was one of the old dames who came first, her mouth all in puckers, the tears streaming down her cheeks. A tottering old man followed, wet-eyed and sobbing. Then other men and other women, with handkerchiefs to mouth, coat-sleeves to eyes, clutching at one another for support—all helpless under the sway of an overpowering emotion. And from unseen companions who had followed them into the little chamber, there still came those distressing cries of poignant, present grief.

As a manifestation of religious fervour, that scene was deeply impressive in its simplicity and sincerity. But not otherwise could I think

of it than as spiritual light shining in mental darkness. The discoveries of Conder, Warren, and the Palestine Exploration Society did not exist for those poor Russian peasants. Worse, the Reformation did not exist for them. In a word, they carried one's mind back to the sixteenth century, and to the old issue whether truth should be determined by the priests or by the facts.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is within Jerusalem (indeed, that is one ground for questioning its claim to shelter Calvary, which was outside the walls); but on leaving the Church of the Holy Sepulchre I experienced a grateful sense of re-entering Jerusalem—of being once more in that city which in its entirety is endowed with the glory of hallowed history, so that the visitor does not need to concentrate contemplation on specific sites and stones, and may reasonably shrink from the effort when the authenticity of those specific sites and stones is open to doubt.

To walk through the most populous quarter of Jerusalem is to realize the tragic destiny of one race of mankind—the race that has survived a world-wide hatred and centuries of persecution. Christians and Mohammedans in that city are numbered by thousands, Jews by tens of thousands. Christians enjoy a full latitude in their holy places. Mohammedans, as the

rulers, have superb mosques wherever they have been pleased to erect them. But for the Jews there is only a little outside alley to localize their heritage of glorious memories. There, every Friday since a remote antiquity, they have besought Heaven to remedy their humiliation and their woes. Again and yet again they raise their voices in the opening words of the seventy-ninth Psalm: "O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance; Thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. . . . We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are about us. How long, Lord? Wilt Thou be angry for ever?"

It was not on a Friday that we passed through the narrow, humble streets and came to the Place of Wailing. But we found there several Jews weeping and uttering their piteous lamentations. They spoke into the crevices of a huge wall that rose as a barrier between them and the site of their Temple of old—that Temple of which the great stones at the base of the wall are believed to be relics.

The quivering petitions of those poor old Jews, like the passionate grief of the Russian pilgrims, were as living links between to-day and the most momentous events in the history of the world. After the lapse of a long series of centuries, here were men shedding tears over



THE PLACE OF WAILING

those things that happened in ancient Jerusalem, which has long since melted into dust. In that narrow outside alley I was witnessing a scene in a drama that had humanity for its theme and eternity for its scope.

We paid our half sovereigns to see what lay on the other side of that wall. Of all areas on the earth, the Haram enclosure offers, I imagine, the most impressive combination of interests. It embraces thirty-five acres of Jerusalem. From that stately area, part pavement and part turf, with its cypress-trees and noble buildings, one can see the Mount of Olives rising near at hand to the east—a gentle slope tinted in the sunlight to hues of tender grey, and mapped across its surface with a web of white walls. Largely an artificial level, the Haram enclosure is arched and hollowed underground to an extent which proves, to the satisfaction of modern authorities, that ancient Jerusalem contrived a system of water storage practically inexhaustible. Of those subterranean reservoirs, one—the Great Sea—has a capacity of two million gallons.

But it is as the nearly certain site of Solomon's Temple, and of the Herod Temple known to Jesus, that the Haram enclosure makes its most powerful appeal to the imagination. On spots deemed to be of special sanctity, Islam has reared its palatial shrines. The Mosque of

Omar, or Dome of the Rock, I have somewhere seen described as the world's most beautiful building. I can merely think of it as presenting the most richly decorated interior that I have ever seen. Mosaic and marble and gold can presumably reach no higher triumph of gleaming splendour than is there achieved.



HARAM ENCLOSURE

When the slippered visitor has arrived at the inner corridor, his brain is drugged by a sense of overpowering magnificence ; and thus the force of contrast lends an almost startling aspect to a great bare, rugged rock which, enclosed by an ornamental grille, occurs beneath the centre of the dome. It is about sixty feet long, by a width somewhat less, and of an altitude that varies from two feet to six. Whether in the ancient Temple this rock supported the Holy of Holies or the Altar of Burnt-Offering is a matter of uncertainty.

Having visited the Dome of the Chain—a beautiful little building that is said to mark the spot where David had his throne of judgment—we made a tour of the Mosque of el-Aksa, and descended into the spacious vaults known as Solomon's Stables.

The Haram enclosure makes its lofty intellectual appeal to all Christendom, as to other vast sections of mankind. But it provides some incidental distress to persons nurtured in the mental freedom of Protestantism. Hollows in the pavement of the two magnificent mosques are indicated, one as the footprint of Jesus, another as the footprint of Mahomet, and a third as the handprint of Gabriel. These monstrous trivialities of ecclesiastical theatricalism are shown by Moslems eager for baksheesh.

Such hindrances to a devout spirit pass,

however, quickly out of mind. Wonderful as are the buildings, reverence is provoked not merely, and not mainly, within their restricted areas. Jerusalem and its surroundings form one vast shrine open to heaven.

To ascend the gentle slopes in the Armenian quarter is, under sanction of authoritative opinion, to believe that one's feet are on Zion. When your eyes and thoughts rest on the Mount of Olives, conspicuous from so many standpoints, there is no element of doubt to qualify a deep content. On its lower slopes you see a little enclosure where several olive-trees survive from long ago. There, or somewhere near, was the Garden of Gethsemane.

Narrow, steep, with its arches of gloom, the Via Dolorosa, stretching in a broken line amid the city, figures to the imagination as an avenue of infinite sorrow, though its claim to a special sanctity is affected by the doubts that involve the traditional Holy Sepulchre. Some part of its mediæval reputation must now be transferred to the road that skirts Jerusalem.

Let me outline the scene as we several times saw it while driving along the east side of the city. On rising ground to the left, venerable grey walls, broad-based on the solid rock, rise to a height of sixty feet, and owe much of their majesty to grand old gateways, some sealed with massive masonry. The ground rises also on the

right, for the road is in a valley—the Valley of Jehoshaphat. We pass a long line of piteous humanity—lepers, the halt, and the aged poor, who offer the testimony of their rags and sores to the eye of compassion. Turning the north-west corner of Jerusalem, we still tread that white road which runs between the city's bulwarks and dusty hills that are honeycombed with tombs.

And presently we pause to peer over a wall at an area of neglect and weeds, where the ground rises with precipitous abruptness. That unlovely little hill is thought to be Calvary.



Harold Copping.

The Wilderness of Judea.

CHAPTER XVI

Bethlehem and the Dead Sea

Rachel's Tomb—Bethlehem and its people—The Church of the Nativity—Bethany—The Wilderness of Judæa—Inn of the Good Samaritan—An impressive ravine—Hermits of the precipice—Modern Jericho—A plague of flies—Across the gorgeous plain—The Dead Sea—A walk along the shore—The reedy Jordan—Ancient Jericho.



WE went by carriage to Bethlehem, stopping twice upon the way—first at a well, later at a shrine.

The well was of the sort that answers to our own acceptance of the word, with a stone ring raised about the mouth. There is poetry in the conception which locates the seeing of a star by the reflection it shed in water. The Wise Men looked down into that well—such is the beautiful tradition—and saw a shining image of the beacon in the heavens.

The imagination asks in vain for a pillar to mark the unchallenged site of Rachel's tomb. What one sees is a bare little square building roofed at one end by a dome. We pursued further our winding course amid the hills, and soon before us lay a little city radiant in the sunshine.

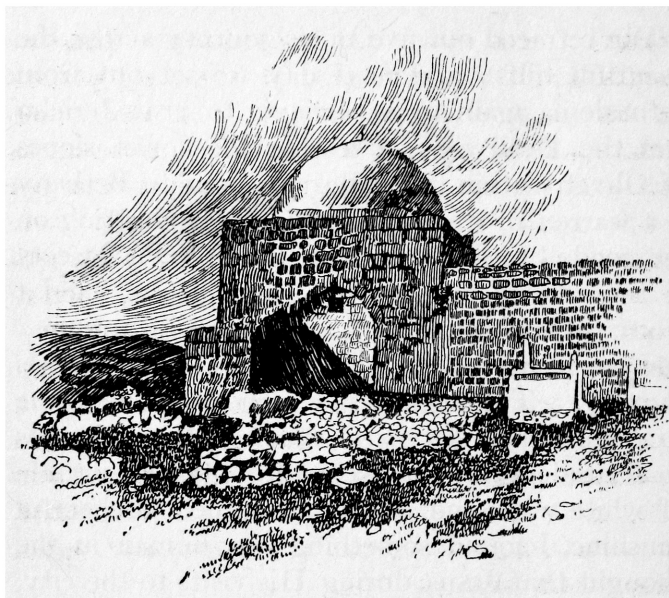
The Christian population of Bethlehem has a marked individuality, of which the prevailing note is brightness, as revealed superficially by touches of colour in the native costumes, and essentially by personal demeanour. Girls wearing white veils came to our carriage with carvings in mother-of-pearl, and other examples of local handiwork ; their business overtures, so far from having any taint of whining importunity, being characterized by smiling alertness and an engaging maidenly dignity.

Passing through the narrow streets, we came upon a large emporium of fancy goods fashioned into some analogy to sacred themes ; so that, as was easy to see, modern Bethlehem is awake to commercial opportunities presented by a constant stream of tourists and pilgrims. This traffic in religious toys might well prove discordant with the spirit in which one visits Bethlehem. But the people of that little city conduct themselves with grace and decorum, and I am sure that they act in this matter innocently and with reverence.

Stooping, we entered the Church of the

Nativity—the oldest and most sacred Christian building in the world. For it encloses a portion of the basilica which, in the year 327, Constantine built upon the birthplace of Jesus, as was attested by Jerome (who dwelt within the edifice soon after its erection), and as is confirmed by modern scholarship. In awe one treads the spacious nave and aisles, where columns and windows are black with antiquity. Reaching the choir, we found Greeks worshipping in the chapel to the right, Armenians in the chapel to the left. Our guide, a Roman Catholic, conducted us to the adjoining Latin Church of St. Catherine, whence we descended, by steps rough hewn, into a subterranean region of supreme sanctity.

We brushed against the solid rock in groping along narrow, crooked passages, which connect several simple and solemn chambers. One square vault was Jerome's study, where hangs an archaic painting that shows him writing. Another vault contains his tomb, and the tombs of Paula and Eustachia—mother and daughter who were Jerome's devoted disciples. Finally one reaches a cavern or grotto having a width of eleven feet and a length more than thrice that measure. At the eastern end is a semi-circular apse, where a silver star in a marble slab marks the spot where Jesus was born. Doors in the grotto open upon steps that lead



RACHEL'S TOMB

to the Greek and Armenian chapels overhead; and it is the shameful and amazing fact that jealousy exists among the rival Christian sects, who sometimes defile those holy precincts by engaging in bloody brawls. Here and there within the building we saw Moslem soldiers stationed—alert, on guard, ready with their loaded weapons to preserve the peace. That Christianity should merit this standing rebuke from an alien religion, by acting in contradiction to itself at the very fountain-head of the faith, makes one hang one's head in bitter humiliation.

We retraced our five miles' journey across the beautiful hills; and next day we set out from Jerusalem, again in a carriage, to visit Jericho and the Dead Sea. Crossing the lower slopes of Olivet, within two miles we came to Bethany—a warren of dwarf stone buildings abutting on the road. I saw a sparrow pecking for insects in the crevice of a garden wall; near at hand a white cat was sporting in a clump of buttercups; and we heard the laughing voices of little girls at play. These things somehow assisted me to realize the relation in which Bethany stands to Jerusalem; and as we confronted that jumble of white walls and dwellings, bathed in cheerful sunshine, I found something very human in the thought that Jesus, during His visits to the city, made His home in the suburbs.

We lingered at Bethany to visit the traditional home of Mary and Martha, which proved interesting as affording probable clues to external aspects of a dwelling at the time of Christ. The people of the village looked poor and unenlightened; and we went to and fro with a following of high-spirited youngsters, who, turning a deaf ear to Solomon's homilies on good behaviour, mingled appeals to our generosity with reflections on our personal appearance.

Having been joined by a mounted soldier engaged to guard us, we resumed our journey down the winding road, which soon passed into

a region of hillocks and hills—a strange region, which puzzled the mind to account for its strangeness. The explanation came with the recollection that other hills and hillocks are green. These smooth undulations were, for the most part, unclothed by vegetation. They exhibited their naked geology to the view ; the crumbling limestone showing various tints of white and grey, with large areas red with iron. Only here and there was a sheltered slope, where a stretch of grass was jewelled with scarlet anemones, and poppies nodded among the mustard and the daisies. Elsewhere it was a sun-scorched landscape.

We were in the Wilderness of Judæa ; and I had an inquisitive eye for such life as might be astir. Over all the miles of our route I saw but one little bird, and only two butterflies. Lizards were numerous enough on stones by the roadside, and I caught sight of a snake as it wriggled away in affright at carriage wheels. Of tillage we saw no sign, save where two donkeys drew a plough that an old man was guiding. On one hill three camels showed conspicuous against the sky-line, and upon the back of each animal, by a droll coincidence, a couple of crows were roosting.

Tradition locates the scene of the Good Samaritan's compassion ; and these my brother alighted to make a sketch. In the neighbouring



Harold Copping.

Evening at Jericho.

inn a great profusion of Palestine mementoes were on sale. While we drank coffee in a gallery of costumes and fancy goods, who should come ambling in but one of our Russian pilgrims? Sweeping off his hat in courtly salutation, the merry-hearted old fellow obviously accepted us on a basis of established friendship; nor did an ignorance of English on the one hand, or of Russian on the other, hinder relations of sustained cordiality.

Returning to the carriage, we continued our downhill journey through the parched realm of grey and red, the road's serpentine course figuring in perspective before us like the lash of a whip, with the mountains of Moab lying beyond in a beautiful blue haze. The air was hot; and it grew hotter, and still hotter. We met a diligence returning with fellow-travellers from Jericho: and I chanced to notice an accompanying cloud of flies hovering about their heads.

A bend in the road brought us to one of the most majestic ravines I have ever seen. Peering over the side, we saw far below a line of vivid vegetation, while the murmur of splashing water came up to us with a grateful suggestion of refreshing coolness. For by this time the oppressive atmosphere had dried my lips and set my flesh athrob. It was the Brook Cherith that made music in our ears.

On the other side of the chasm, the jagged cliff rose perpendicular to a dizzy height ; and up there on the face of the precipice we espied little walls and windows made by man. It lifted the mind out of accustomed channels to think of human beings dwelling in such elevated isolation. The holy hermits of those eyries, Solomon said, hold only such occasional communion with the outer world as is necessary to procure the bare requirements of life.

From that point the road descended steeply, and soon we arrived upon a vast plain. Dimly in the surrounding distance I saw nature in a new aspect, steeped in strange colours ; but the hot, heavy air induced a mental lassitude, and I heeded only that part of the immediate foreground to which Solomon called our attention. There, it seemed, had stood the Jericho that Jesus knew—now a site level and bare save for some stumps of masonry that once were towers. We rode on to a little group of houses with a background of trees ; and half an hour later we sat down to lunch in the hotel of modern Jericho. Then I had my first experience of a plague of flies.

Tablecloth and ceiling were black with them, and the intervening space was filled with myriads on the wing. What with the heat, and that enveloping cloud of buzzing insects, I am bound to say we did not enjoy our lunch. The management seemed to have left no stone

unturned so far as glass traps, sticky paper, and other expedients were concerned. Moreover, behind us were posted attendants who waved fans persistently about our heads. But man is powerless against hungry, obstinate, innumerable flies. Retiring routed, and eager for a wash, we went upstairs to our bedrooms, which proved to be full of mosquitoes.

But all these discomforts were forgotten when presently we were driving across the Plain—a gorgeous, majestic, awful region. Conceive yourself traversing a vast arena many miles across, hemmed in to right and left by mountains, and with an illimitable view of water on ahead. Conceive this



TWO CHILDREN AT JERICO

landscape coloured in great streaks and patches with brilliant, unexpected hues. The naked marls and sands form areas of dazzling white, dull gold, shining silver, and pearly grey. The sea ahead is a rich, velvety blue. The limestone mountains stained with iron are mammoth walls of alabaster and glowing red, save where in the distance they shimmer with luminous shades of mauve and purple. Nor is green omitted from the variety of colours flaming in the sunshine. Turn your

head and you see, away to the left, a vivid, verdant line that marks the course of the Jordan.

Our carriage went jolting over the mounds and hollows of that parched and variegated ground ; and anon we arrived beside the Dead Sea, and stood on its shelving beach of pebbles. There was no wind, and a great stillness lay upon the lonely waste of water. Some slight wooden shelters, with a thoughtful Arab in charge, stood beside the shore. No boat, or buoy, or other sign of man, was anywhere visible.

Some writers have asserted that sentient beings cannot live in the Dead Sea, and that birds expire in the act of flying over it. Such was not the fate of several birds that essayed the feat while we were there ; and as for the former statement, did I not see in the water a conspicuous creature, some six feet long, and not merely alive, but swimming and diving with exuberant vitality ? Nor was my enjoyment of a bathe in the Dead Sea one whit less than my brother's. That the water had an unusual buoyancy we realized on trying to plunge beneath the surface—for the rest, it had a taste so salt as almost to be bitter, and we came ashore with a tingling sensation about our eyes.

While my brother was sketching, I went alone to explore the shore. Along the mile or



Harold Copping.

On the Shore of the Dead Sea.

so of my walk, the beach was thickly strewn with a brown litter of tree trunks and roots, barkless branches, and stout canes—flotsam of nature. For shells and dead fish I looked in vain.

My laborious tramp on the yielding stones brought me at last to the place where, in a leafy jungle, the Jordan came pouring through several channels to merge with the sea.

Wandering about the river bank, I peered into pools and eddies, and found the water alive with fishes. Nor were they all small fry. One grey creature, some fifteen inches long, went splashing off at my approach. I pursued him from spot to spot—for his jerky journey through the shallows was marked by cloudy trails—but, coming to deeper water, he eluded my further inquisitiveness.

Later I found among the trees a picturesque hut set on poles and built of reeds and branches—its occupants two swarthy individuals whose bearing was friendly if their words were meaningless to me. By gesture I revealed a curiosity to learn the occasion of their dwelling in that lonely delta. They were fishermen, it would seem; for, conducting me to the rear of that strange abode, they pointed to a line of their captures that hung in the sun to dry—a sort of large, flat-headed barbel which, or I was much mistaken, were fellows to the fish I had seen in the water.

Also they showed me their little boat moored against the bank ; whereupon, concerned not to miss an opportunity to cruise on the Jordan, I signalled my desire to be taken for a row. Nor were they slow to gratify the whim of an intrusive stranger who could give no account of himself ; and a minute later I was being borne along the bosom of the world's most interesting river. The cloudy water moved with great momentum down the reedy avenue ; so that, perceiving the toil it cost my companions to make headway against the torrent, I early directed them to reverse our course and return to the bank.

They were Greek fishermen, I afterwards learnt from Solomon, and it seemed that the fish they catch are endowed by tradition with a sacred significance, so that the skulls, embellished by crude paintings, find a sale among visitors to Palestine. As we drove back to the hotel, a new interest was provided by the flights of storks that moved overhead—white processions flashing against the azure sky.

Having dined under the irksome conditions that prevailed at lunch, we sat after dark in the garden, quenching our thirst with mineral waters of exorbitant price, and watching dainty fire-flies flit among the trees.

Next morning we walked through modern Jericho, which proved in the main a collection of

huts made with sticks and reeds, and occupied by a primitive people scantily attired in rags. Journeying farther afield, we came to the mounds and reservoirs that mark the site of yet a third Jericho—the Old Testament city. Here we picked up fragments of pottery and specimens of other relics that Arab excavations had brought to the surface.

The rest may be told in a sentence—we went back in the carriage to Jerusalem, and by rail I journeyed thence through orange groves to Jaffa and the sea. So ended the most glorious experience of my life, an experience that can never be excelled, and never repeated. For there is only one Palestine, and a second visit would lack the quality of a revelation.

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